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ABSTRACT

NARRATIVES OF THE LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT OF  
ADULTS WHO SERVED AS SUMMER CAMP STAFF  
IN THE MENNONITE SETTING: A  
MULTIPLE CASE STUDY

by

Jason Harrison

Chair: Janet Ledesma

## ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University

School of Education

Title: NARRATIVES OF THE LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT OF ADULTS WHO  
SERVED AS SUMMER CAMP STAFF IN THE MENNONITE SETTING: A  
MULTIPLE CASE STUDY

Name of researcher: Jason Harrison

Name and degree of faculty chair: Janet Ledesma, Ph.D.

Date completed: October 2013

### Problem

Leaders today need a new set of knowledge and skills to be effective in collaborative environments. The focus of this study was to investigate how collaborative environments can contribute to leadership development. The purpose of this study was to describe how the collaborative environment of summer camp helped shape emerging adults as leaders. The summer camp setting is inherently collaborative and, therefore, can inform and develop leaders for future collaborative settings. The research question in focus for this study was, How do adults who served at a summer camp as emerging adults describe the experiences that helped shape them as leaders? The conceptual framework

included Anabaptist theology, transformative learning theory, servant leadership, and collaboration.

### Method

The primary research design was a qualitative design (Creswell). A case study method (Yin) was utilized in the Mennonite camp setting. The data in this setting were gathered through the participants' stories of their experiences using narrative inquiry (Connelly & Clandinin).

The criterion for this purposeful sampling directly reflected the purpose for this study and guided the identification of information-rich cases. The primary criteria were (a) the participants served at a Mennonite camp for at least two summers, (b) the participants served at a camp as an emerging adult, and (c) the participants were chosen with an effort to create a balance between gender and ethnicity.

### Findings

This study revealed three main findings: (a) as collaborative environments Mennonite camps provide an important context for leadership development; (b) participants in this study were able to identify how their experience on the camp staff contributed to their leadership development in significant ways; and (c) participants could identify ways that their experience on the staff of a Mennonite camp continues to influence their practice of leadership in current collaborative environments.

The research data in this study revealed that as collaborative environments Mennonite camps provide an important context for leadership development. The contribution to leadership development was evident in several ways. First, a proclivity

toward servant leadership rises naturally out of the camp's embodiment of Christ-centered Anabaptist values. These values are well aligned with servant leadership theory because, for Anabaptists, the communal ethic is a defining characteristic as they strive to be servant leaders. Next, the camp environment is inherently a context for transformative learning because of the focus on developing nurturing relationships that allow for deep self-reflection that enables critical changes to occur as perspectives shift. Next, the data indicated that “relational wisdom” was developed as an important aspect of leadership in the collaborative setting of camp.

Participants in this study were able to identify how their experience on the camp staff contributed to their leadership development in significant ways. First, the need to articulate beliefs at campfire, devotions, and Bible study challenged the participants to delve deeper into what they believe and then present it to the campers and staff. Second, the participants practiced leading during every hour of the day, which required them to introduce and facilitate the group interactions while being mentored by more experienced staff. Through repetition of practicing new skills, leadership skills grew and participants were led to reflect on their new understandings of leadership. Third, the structured team-building activities and unstructured group bonding time developed the skill of communication. Through active and quiet reflection, participants indicated that serving at camp had taught them to communicate on a deeper level.

The research data in this study revealed that participants could identify ways that their experience on the staff of a Mennonite camp continues to influence their practice of leadership in current collaborative environments. The reflections in current roles as leaders helped participants discern and embrace their many talents and gifts that had been

encouraged at camp. The most significant ways their early experiences contribute to their development as leaders in collaborative environment included: perspective transformation, identity development, and responsibility growth. Perspective transformation was derived from acknowledging assumptions about self and other staff and then challenging those assumptions to develop a new perspective. Serving at summer camp became an opportunity for the participants to mature through exercising independence from prior relationships while taking on new responsibilities. Identity development was evident through the positive relationships cultivated among camp staff, which allowed the participants to develop their identity by learning about themselves while furthering their faith journey. Responsibility growth was revealed as an integral part of leadership development. Responsibility growth occurred through learning from trial and error of being the primary care-giver for a group of children. Developing good judgment in order to respond to critical situations helped the participants grow in their integrity. The experience also led to a better understanding of the responsibilities associated with certain career paths such as being a teacher, pastor, or not-for-profit administrator.

## Discussion

The experiences needed to contribute to leadership development in a collaborative environment are transformative when situated within Anabaptist theology. The Mennonite camp setting allows for a unique intersection of leadership practice, mentoring, and spiritual growth. The supportive relationships espoused the Anabaptist values of reconciliation, service to others, and group discernment.

The way that the summer staff developed their understanding of leadership can be understood within Mezirow's transformative learning theory. Although they had varying degrees of insight into how their experience affected them, all of the participants indicated that their experience had a positive impact on their leadership growth. Some articulated that their experience at camp involved learning on a deeper level. In categorizing these levels within transformative learning, Habermas identified instrumental learning and communicative learning. Learning on the instrumental level was a way to improve task-oriented problem solving or to improve performance. The communicative level was a process of reflecting with a group of people to gain a deeper understanding of perspectives. Examples of instrumental learning included learning to create lesson plans, teach activities, and speak before a group. These examples were highlighted by the participants as being crucial to developing skills for their future careers such as going into ministry, serving as a missionary, becoming a teacher, or working in not-for-profit administration. Communicative learning occurred as the staff critically reflected on their personal and spiritual growth. Through these intentional times of reflecting, they were able to more accurately identify patterns and begin to construct new meaning of leadership through consensual validation. Furthermore, the increased level of self-awareness and depth of group reflection led to examining presuppositions about their role as leaders. The summer staff helped each other to explore alternative perspectives as they practiced leading in new ways.

The leadership development that took place in the context of this study was a result of a servant leadership style that fostered critical group reflection and led to new leadership practices.



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School of Education

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ADULTS WHO SERVED AS SUMMER CAMP STAFF  
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MULTIPLE CASE STUDY

A Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

by

Jason Harrison

October 2013

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Jason Harrison

APPROVAL BY THE COMMITTEE:

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Chair: Janet Ledesma

---

Dean, School of Education  
James R. Jeffery

---

Member: Shirley A. Freed

---

Member: David Boshart

---

External: Paul Petersen

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Date approved

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Background to the Problem**

Historically, leadership development has focused mostly on the development of an individual. Recent scholars (Day, 2001; Day & Harrison, 2011; Hart, Conklin, & Allen, 2008; Van Velsor, McCauley, & Ruderman, 2010) argue that *leader* development pertains to the development on an individual level, whereas *leadership* development pertains to the interaction between individual leaders and the social-cultural environment in which they function. Re-conceptualizing leadership development, according to Ardichvili and Manderscheid (2008), requires shifting from an emphasis on hierarchical relationships, to recognizing the complex dynamics and emergent patterns within organizations.

Over 75% of companies claim that leadership development is a challenge (Day, Harrison, & Halpin, 2012). One of the biggest challenges of leadership development is that leadership is one of the least understood subjects even though it is accepted as one of the oldest and most potent forces of organized life (Kakabadse & Korac-Kakabadse, 1998; G. Thomas, Martin, & Riggio, 2013). Within this challenge is the task of better defining who or what is being developed in an organization.

Carroll and Simpson (2012) claim that leadership development is a lifelong process that involves helping people to work together in a collaborative environment.

Collaborative environments help to develop a leader's skills better than do non-collaborative environments because (a) in collaborative environments leaders learn to develop social capital which is an important aspect of leadership because it provides access to resources (Lesser, 2012); (b) collaborative environments provide an opportunity for leaders to understand the importance of contributing to a common cause instead of working only for one's personal ends (Blanchard, 1995); and (c) leaders develop a stronger sense of identity as they reflect on their roles in a collaborative environment (Carroll & Levy, 2010).

The focus of leadership development needs to shift from solely developing individual leaders to a broader leadership development that includes developing social capital among teams and organizations (Day & Harrison, 2007). There are many opportunities associated with this collaborative environment. One example is that social capital can be developed in a collaborative environment to help access the best of what people have to offer (Goleman, 2007). Social capital is a person's social networks, connections, trust, and ability to collaborate (Spillane, 2012). Social capital improves relationships while increasing efficiency of action, creativity, and learning. Social capital can be utilized to improve individual and organizational performance (Lesser, 2012) and produce cooperative action (Carroll & Simpson, 2012).

In collaborative environments, it is also important to understand whether people feel responsible to contribute to a common cause. To develop this understanding, a shift is needed from focusing on identity as an individual to focusing on identity within the group (Lord & Hall, 2005). A person's identity can be revealed by understanding his or her place within the group (Gardner, 2011; P. Jarvis, 2012). Through these social

relationships, individuals develop their identities to a common cause. Relationships can grant individuals the opportunity to see themselves not only as valid contributing members but also as valid leaders of the group (DeRue & Ashford, 2010).

Another opportunity associated with collaborative environments is a change in the dueling motivations of individuals helping themselves versus helping others. Addressing this dichotomy requires a departure from trying to control others for personal gain to, instead, having a perspective of encouraging, listening, and facilitating others for the betterment of the group (Blanchard, 1995). An altruistic view, as modeled in Servant Leadership Theory (Greenleaf, 1991), has been found to foster collaboration, build social capital, and increase self-awareness through serving others (van Dierendonck, 2011; Whetstone, 2002). In other words, the perspective of putting the needs of others first and helping them to reach their fullest potential is the key to working together.

The summer camp setting is one environment where many young people are providing service to others while exploring and learning how to work together (DeGraaf & Glover, 2011; Jacobs, McAvoy, & Bobilya, 2005; Johnson, Goldman, Garey, Britner, & Weaver, 2011). For more than 50 years, Mennonite camps have been an experiential and collaborative learning environment for forming leaders for many vocations. Hundreds of emerging adults participating in camp staffs are formed for leadership every summer. Church leaders and the broader church community have neglected to recognize the intrinsic contributions camps make to developing leaders. Though Mennonite camps share Anabaptist theology and values in common with college, seminary, and denominational leadership development systems, camps do not receive formal validation and recognition for their contribution to the leadership development process.

To better understand the knowledge and skills needed for leadership development, further research is needed on the specific theories, concepts, and practices involved in leadership development within collaborative environments (Carroll & Simpson, 2012; Singh, 2012).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Leaders today need new knowledge and skills to be prepared for the challenges of leading in collaborative environments. The problem in focus for this study was the need for a better understanding of the kinds of experiences that contribute to leadership development for collaborative environments.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to describe how the collaborative environment of summer camp helped shape emerging adults as leaders.

### **Research Question**

How do adults who served at summer camps as emerging adults describe the experiences that helped shape them as leaders?

### **Context of the Study**

One place where people are learning to work well with others is the Mennonite camp setting (Eby & Eby, 2006). However, there has been only anecdotal reporting of the leadership development in the Mennonite camp setting involving the knowledge and skills needed to address these challenges. Expectations of camp staff that foster leadership development indicated by Eby and Eby (2006) include: becoming responsible

for other people, articulating faith, becoming conscious of being role models, exercising leadership gifts, and finding a place to be needed.

The Mennonite camp setting has lacked formal systematic research as a collaborative environment for leadership development. Many college-aged students, also known as emerging adults, serve at Mennonite camps in North America. Though Mennonite camps have been in existence since the early 1920s, little systematic research exists on the important ways these organizations contribute to the leadership development of emerging adults (Eby & Eby, 2006; Kaethler & Yoder, 2011).

Recent studies with non-Mennonite camp staff have been limited to identity exploration (Johnson et al., 2011), motivation to serve at a camp (Kunkel, 2007), increases in emotional intelligence (Jacobs et al., 2005), and the long-term impacts of serving at camp (DeGraaf & Glover, 2011). None have looked at leadership development through the lens of the experiences of Mennonite camp staff. Therefore, the experiences of emerging adults serving at Mennonite camps need to be explored in order to better inform leadership development.

### **Research Design**

The primary research design was a qualitative design (Creswell, 2012; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Merriam, 2009). A case study method was utilized (Berg, 2004; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009, 2011) in the Mennonite camp setting. The data in this setting were gathered through the participants' stories of their experiences using narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2010; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Creswell, 2012).

### **Rationale for the Study**

Summer camp is inherently collaborative and therefore can inform and develop leaders for future collaborative settings. By studying leadership in the Mennonite camp context, reflections of previous staff members will inform camp directors to enhance leadership development in their settings.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework included Anabaptist theology, transformative learning theory, servant leadership theory, and collaboration. This study took place at a Mennonite Camp associated with Mennonite Church USA. Mennonite Church USA is rooted in the Anabaptist tradition. The conceptual assumptions of the camp and many participants reflected Anabaptist values that provided the overarching conceptual theological frame for this study. The second component of the conceptual framework was transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1978; E. Taylor & Cranton, 2012), nuanced by the ontological assumptions of Anabaptist theology. Transformative learning theory explains the type of learning that enables critical changes to occur as perspectives shift from an individual to a collective focus. The third component of the conceptual framework was servant leadership theory. For Anabaptists, the communal ethic is a defining characteristic as they strive to be servant leaders (Neufeldt, 2013). Servant leadership is essential to the altruistic approach of serving others to enable them to also develop as leaders (Bryman, Collinson, Grint, Jackson, & Uhl-Bien, 2011). The final component of the conceptual framework was collaboration.

The first component of the conceptual framework was Anabaptist theology. Anabaptists renewed the accounts of the early church in the New Testament of being

multi-voiced, participative, and expectant that the Holy Spirit would lead all members of the church community to discern and understand Scripture (Murray Williams & Murray Williams, 2012). Rather than relying only on the biblical scholars to have access to Scriptures and a relationship with God, all believers have access and a responsibility to study Scripture (Finger, 2004). Because of its communitarian commitments, Anabaptism fosters collaboration.

The second component of the conceptual framework, transformative learning theory, dealt with learning and discovering a new way of thinking. At the foundation of transformative learning, according to Freire (1970), is knowledge that is attained through a process of inquiry and creation where a group of people exchange ideas, discuss problems from various perspectives, and construct meaning together. Critical reflection (Mezirow, 1990), as a collaborative process of transformative learning, may lead to perspective transformation (Mezirow, 1991) resulting in a new understanding of leadership. Day et al. (2012) claim that leadership development could be better understood with an integrative theoretical approach linking adult development, identity and self-regulation, and expertise acquisition.

The third component of the conceptual framework was servant leadership theory. Greenleaf (1991) explained that “the great leader is seen as servant first, and that simple fact is the key to his greatness” (Greenleaf, 1991, p. 21). Listening, praising, and encouraging are attributes modeled by servant leaders (Blanchard, 1995) fostering a nurturing environment. Servant leadership, according to Laub et al. (1999), is inclusive and promotes community among teams that leads to stronger collaborative relationships. In focusing on follower performance and growth, Northouse (2012) claimed that for

followers, the expected outcome is greater self-actualization. Greenleaf (1991) contributed to distinguishing between leader development versus leadership development and the dueling interest of personal gain versus the common cause with his test of who a servant leader is:

The true test of a servant-leader is this: do those around the servant-leader become wiser, freer, more autonomous, healthier, and better able themselves to become servants? And will the least privileged of society be benefited or at least not further deprived? (p. 7)

The final component of the conceptual framework was collaboration. Wood and Gray (1991) claimed that collaboration occurs when a group of autonomous stakeholders of a problem engage in an interactive process, using shared rules, norms, and structures, to act or decide on issues related to that domain. This interactive process of engagement is also found in the Anabaptist ethic of community that leads to group discernment. Collaboration exists when there is an interactive process involving a change-oriented relationship with all stakeholders (Wood & Gray, 1991). A recent study by Garber, Madigan, Click, and Fitzpatrick (2009) indicated a positive correlation between collaboration and servant leadership among participants. Individual leader development and group leadership development were explored to better understand how the participants served each other as they developed as leaders (Carroll & Simpson, 2012; Day, 2001).

The following analogy of leadership development explains how the four parts of the conceptual framework work together. Leadership development is like a vehicle that can transport people on a journey. The length and quality of the journey are determined by its internal system. The highly refined fuel for the vehicle is Anabaptist theology. This fuel is derived from the life and teachings of Jesus. The engine of the vehicle is like



transformative learning. Within the engine, critical reflection ignites the fuel from Anabaptist convictions to create momentum. Then, servant leadership is applied as a lubricant to enable all parts to move more smoothly and function at their greatest potential. Once movement is initiated, a series of other systems is set into motion, creating new ways of working collaboratively.

### **Significance/Importance of the Study**

This study is significant to leadership development because summer camp is inherently collaborative and therefore can inform and develop leaders for future collaborative settings. However, there is a lack of research in this area. The stories of the participants helped identify the knowledge and skills for leadership development needed to work in a collaborative environment.

### **Definition of Terms**

*Anabaptist Christian:* The Anabaptist movement began in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century as an attempt to reclaim the Christo-centric way of life practiced by the early church. Becker (2008) defines Anabaptist Christians through three sacred core values: (a) Jesus is the center of their faith; (b) community is the center of their life; and (c) reconciliation is the center of their work.

*Critical reflection:* Mezirow (Mezirow, 1990) defined critical reflection as a critique of the presuppositions on which our beliefs have been built.

*Collaboration:* Wood and Gray (1991) claim that collaboration occurs when a group of autonomous stakeholders of a problem engage in an interactive process, using shared rules, norms, and structures, to act or decide on issues related to that domain.

*Collaborative environment:* A synergistic work atmosphere wherein multiple parties must work together to promote an ongoing integration of ideas and interdependency among multiple stakeholders to progress toward the enhancement of the organizational practices and processes (VanVactor, 2012).

*Emerging adulthood:* A developmental stage for identity exploration and development after adolescence during the period from the late teens through about the mid-20s (Arnett & Tanner, 2006).

*Learning:* Mezirow (Mezirow, 1990) defined learning as the process of making a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of an experience, which guides subsequent understanding, appreciation, and action.

*Leader development:* The expansion of a person's capacity to be effective in leadership roles and processes (Van Velsor et al., 2010, p. 29).

*Leadership development:* An ongoing group process that is grounded in personal development, embedded in experience, facilitated by experience-based interventions and goes beyond individual leader development through development of individual connections, capacities for collectives, connections among collectives, and cultures and systems of collectives (Van Velsor et al., 2010, p. 26).

*Leadership identity:* Is comprised of three elements: individual internalization, relational recognition, and collective endorsement (DeRue & Ashford, 2010).

*Mennonite:* A person associated with the Christian faith tradition with roots in the Protestant Reformation and Anabaptist theology (Finger, 2004).

*Perspective transformation:* The process of becoming critically aware of how and why our assumptions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand, and feel about our world (Mezirow, 1991).

*Servant leadership:* The model of servant leadership is to empower and develop people; to show humility, to be authentic, to accept people for who they are, to provide direction, and to be stewards who work for the good of the whole (van Dierendonck, 2011, p. 1232).

*Social capital:* The value created by fostering connections between individuals (Lesser, 2012).

*Transformative learning:* Mezirow (1991) defines transformative learning as learning that transforms problematic frames of reference—sets of fixed assumptions and expectations (habits of mind, meaning perspectives, mind-sets)—to make them more inclusive, open, reflective, and emotionally able to change.

### **Assumptions**

The major assumption in this study was that the participants who previously served at a Mennonite camp (a) had experiences that helped shape their leadership, (b) were able to articulate their experiences in a way that was informative to a better understanding of leadership development, and (c) that I was able to understand what leadership means to each person.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The limitations in my study were the participants' openness to reflect on their experiences, lack of time to properly reflect on experiences, and my own challenges to understand the experiences as retold by the participants.

### **Delimitations**

The study was delimited to adults ages 19 and older, who served at a Mennonite camp in the Midwest, and were chosen with assistance from the camp director.

### **Organization of the Study**

This dissertation consists of five chapters. Chapter 1 outlines the overview of the study. Chapter 2 reviews the literature on the most salient issues related to this study. Chapter 3 describes the methodology used in the study. Chapter 4 describes and analyzes the responses from the interviews in the study. Finally, Chapter 5 summarizes the findings of how the experiences of emerging adults serving at a Mennonite camp help shape them as leaders. The findings are then reconnected to the academic literature.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### **Introduction**

This review of the literature addresses how emerging adults develop as leaders. The chapter is divided into three major topics: (a) leadership development; (b) conceptual framework; and (c) identity development.

The first topic, leadership development, highlights the background of leadership development, the distinction between leader development and leadership development, and evaluative studies of leadership development.

The next topic is the conceptual framework. The first component of the conceptual framework is an overview of Anabaptist theology. The second component of the conceptual framework is transformative learning theory. It is explained and nuanced by the ontological assumptions of Anabaptist theology, explaining the type of learning that enables critical changes to occur as perspectives shift from an individual to a collective focus. The third component highlights how servant leadership theory promotes growth in community. Specifically, it focuses on the work of Greenleaf (1991), the characteristics listed by various models, and the potential impact on the community. Servant leadership is essential to the altruistic approach of serving others to enable them to also develop as leaders (Bryman et al., 2011). The last component of the conceptual

framework focuses on how collaboration is understood through a shared leadership and an interactive process.

The third and final topic, identity development, gives background to emerging adulthood as a stage of development and how the summer camp setting provides an excellent environment for leadership development for persons in this developmental stage. This review will also explore literature on understanding of self within emotional intelligence including the four main variables: self-awareness, self-regulation, social awareness, and relationship management.

## **Leadership Development**

### **Background**

The history of leadership development has been viewed through a variety of understandings. In the *Sage Handbook of Leadership*, Bryman et al. (2011) describe four approaches to understanding the patterns of leadership development as: (a) an increasingly relational leadership model over time; (b) a pendulum swinging over time between centralized or decentralized models of leadership; (c) a recurring influence of science versus culture defining models of leadership; and (d) a framing of the political ideologies of the day (Bryman et al., 2011). More recently the trend manifests itself in some form of distributed leadership where there is a need for a “collective approach to decision-making to counter the romance of (individual) leadership and to better cope with an increasingly complex world” (Bryman et al., 2011, p. 8).

Most of the literature on leadership development continues to focus on the individual leader (DeRue & Ashford, 2010; Dragoni, Tesluk, Russell, & Oh, 2009; Popper & Amit, 2009). However, Probert and Turnbull James (2011) claim there is a

leadership development crisis that is caused mainly by a dominance of competency-based leadership development which they see as another version of great person theory. Probert and Turnbull James (2011) go on to propose that,

instead of focusing on the conscious and individualized perspectives of leadership that comprise a competency model, organizations need to focus on the unconscious and collective assumptions about leadership that delimit how organizational members perceive, attribute, and evaluate leadership in their organizations. (Probert & Turnbull James, 2011, p. 138)

Shifting the focus from the individual to the group allows for the strengths of others to be more utilized. This is more effective than expecting one person to demonstrate all of the traits needed to give leadership in an organization.

#### Leader Development Versus Leadership Development

Recent scholars (Day, 2001; Day & Harrison, 2011; Hart et al., 2008; Van Velsor et al., 2010) argue that leader development pertains to the development on an individual level, whereas leadership development pertains to the interaction between individual leaders and the social-cultural environment in which they function. Reconceptualizing leadership development, according to Ardichvili and Manderscheid (2008), requires shifting from an emphasis on hierarchical relationships to recognizing the complex dynamics and emergent patterns within organizations.

The switch from focusing on hierarchical relationships to recognizing the complex dynamics and emergent patterns within an organization is understood through complexity science. Complexity science reframes leadership by focusing on the dynamic interactions between all individuals and explaining how those interactions can, under certain conditions, produce emergent outcomes (Dickens, 2012; Lichtenstein & Plowman, 2009). Lichtenstein and Plowman (2009) go on to propose “a *leadership of*

*emergence*: rather than leadership ‘being in’ a specific manager or CEO, it *emerges* throughout the organization as positive influence, novelty, and outcomes” (Lichtenstein & Plowman, 2009, p. 618).

In addition to the complex dynamics and emergent patterns within organizations and the emergence of leadership, shifting away from a hierarchical model allows for an adaptive collaborative approach to leadership (Highsmith, 2000). Recent research by O’Brien, Littlefield, and Goddard-Truitt (2013) indicates that a collaborative environment is productive and creates the necessary tools so all decisions and work can be conducted by the group. According to VanVactor (2012), leadership exists within relationships, and encouraging a collaborative environment promotes an ongoing integration of ideas and interdependency among multiple stakeholders throughout an organization.

### Evaluative Studies of Leadership Development

Most evaluation models fail to capture the impact of leadership development programs that are becoming more informal, experiential, and focused on how leaders interact and learn in collaboration with one another (Black & Earnest, 2009; Watkins, Lysø, & deMarrais, 2011). However, some more recent evaluation efforts have addressed this gap by utilizing a theory of change approach that identifies critical incidents (Watkins et al., 2011) and combines social learning theory, adult learning theory, and the EvaluLEAD framework (Black & Earnest, 2009). It is within this more recent stream of work in which this current study is situated because of the connections to the learning and social skills that are developed in a collaborative environment.



A study that Eich (2008) conducted with four leadership development programs targeting undergraduate students found that high-quality leadership programs need three main attributes: (a) participants engaging in building and sustaining a learning community; (b) student-centered experiential learning; and (c) research-grounded continuous program development (Eich, 2008). The findings from this study could guide the design of programs and participants' learning by helping participants grow through self-discovery, personal development, and collaborative leadership with others (Eich, 2008).

A study by Pinnington (2011) examined five leadership approaches (charismatic, transformational, authentic, servant, and spiritual) in private, not-for-profit, and public sectors. A key finding on servant leadership emphasized the leaders' improving efforts of caring for others, serving others, and sharing of power and decision-making with others. The three items taken from spiritual leadership emphasize leaders' vision describing a journey, creating hope, faith, and membership through feeling understood (Pinnington, 2011). In the private sector, organizations are committed to being profitable and therefore ascribed to leadership development that is focused on charismatic and transformational approaches. According to Pinnington (2011), within the three sectors in her research, the not-for-profit and public sectors held a greater value for the social side of leadership than did the level of confidence and power of the leader. Instead, there was a much greater need to collaborate to reach common goals. The not-for-profit and public sectors valued the authentic aspects of leadership such as being genuine and influencing followers' self-awareness. Therefore, these sectors were more receptive to newer distributed and

relational approaches which considered multiple, diverse groups of social actors for leadership and leadership development initiatives (Pinnington, 2011).

A formal evaluation by C. Jarvis, Gulati, McCririck, and Simpson (2013) examined two cohorts, each comprising approximately 20 senior managers working in adult social care. Their study focused on evaluation techniques such as observations, interviews, and guided conversations. They argue that their approach to evaluation is “both a research intervention and a contribution to the development process” (C. Jarvis et al., 2013, p. 27). Furthermore, leadership development needs to address the requirement for leaders to know in the context of not-knowing and to get stakeholders to work with the uncertainty and anxiety that arose from embracing these tensions (C. Jarvis et al., 2013).

This review of leadership development addresses the unconscious and collective assumptions about leadership. It also reviewed how organizational members perceived, attributed, and evaluated leadership in their organizations. A high emphasis on relationships and fostering a collaborative environment promote an ongoing integration of ideas and interdependency among multiple stakeholders through an organization. This study is situated within these more recent streams of leadership development through its connections to the learning and social skills that are developed in a collaborative environment.

## **Conceptual Framework**

### **Anabaptist Theology**

As part of the movement within the Christian Protestant Reformation of the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, Anabaptist emerged as an illegal movement by peasant-artisans (Finger,

2004). The term Anabaptist means to be baptized again after being baptized as an infant, which was required by law at the time. A historic Anabaptist perspective was rooted in the biblical teaching of baptism that a spiritual conversion starts with preaching and teaching, then faith forms, and then baptism can occur (Finger, 2004). Foundational convictions include Christ-centeredness, biblical authority, and communal discernment. “More important than finely nuanced theological propositions is the simple call to follow Jesus in showing compassion, loving mercy and being reconciled with one’s enemies” (Dueck, 2010, p. 169). Some Anabaptist groups later organized as a global federation known as the Mennonite World Conference. Mennonite World Conference includes the largest denomination in North America, Mennonite Church USA, as well as other denominations. Bender (1944) claimed three main points of Anabaptism: transformation is based on the teachings and example of Christ, the basis for voluntary church membership is conversion and a commitment to holy living, and Christian love and nonresistance are applied to all human relationships. Becker and Kraybill (2008) define Anabaptist Christians through three sacred core values: (a) Jesus is the center of their faith; (b) community is the center of their life; and (c) reconciliation is the center of their work.

Within the Protestant Reformation, Anabaptists subscribed to a priesthood of all believers giving lay people, or non-clergy, the responsibility for reading and understanding the Bible. This priesthood allows people to contribute additional voices for responding and sharing (Kraybill, 2010). Though Anabaptists value biblical scholarship, it is not privileged over lay member interpretation when doing biblical/spiritual discernment on matters of faith and life in the congregation. Another focus of Anabaptist

theology was based on the German word *gelassenheit*, translated “yieldedness.” It is understood as both submitting to God’s will as well as submitting to the faith community. It results from being completely open to receiving guidance from the Spirit of Jesus as an act of discernment within the faith community (Weaver, 1993).

This review of Anabaptist theology highlights Christ-centeredness, biblical authority, communal discernment, and compassion. The conceptual assumptions of the camp and the participants who comprise the subjects of this study reflected Anabaptist values that provided the overarching conceptual frame for this study.

### Transformative Learning

Because leadership development in collaborative environments involves a contextual learning process, this section describes transformative learning. Specifically, this section deals with the issues of critical reflection, perspective transformation, and instrumental and communicative learning. After a brief background, attention is given to how this way of knowing is nuanced by the Anabaptist assumptions that guide this study.

#### **Background of Transformative Learning**

Transformative learning is the process of becoming aware of one's own tacit assumptions and expectations and those of others and assessing their relevance for making an interpretation (Mezirow, 2000). Mezirow defined it as a deep shift in perspective, leading to more open, more permeable, and better justified meaning perspectives (Mezirow, 1978). Transformative learning was greatly influenced by Maslow, Frager, and Fadiman’s (1970) concept of self-actualization. It is a process for adults to learn to think for themselves by freeing their minds for active engagement and

questioning of how they know what they know (Cranton, 2011). Carroll and Simpson (2012) explain this process as a shift in focus from authorities to individual authority, allowing the individual more freedom to critically engage their thoughts.

### **Transformative Learning Within Anabaptist Assumptions**

Transformative learning theory has roots in liberation theology. It will be explored within the limits of Anabaptism to further define how this study approached working with the concepts of leadership development in a collaborative environment. Transformative learning theory grew out of the work of Freire (1970) who was an educator with strong influence in sociology, political theory, development studies, and liberation theology (Mayo & Msida, 2011). As Aronowitz argued, “Freire’s pedagogy was grounded in a fully developed philosophical anthropology, that is, a theory of human nature, one might say a secular liberation theology” (Aronowitz, 1993, p. 12). Although liberation theology and Anabaptist theology are not directly aligned, Murray (2000) claimed that Anabaptist theology and liberation theology could serve as excellent conversation partners because they: (a) both use the local community for interpretation; (b) both empower ordinary, uneducated believers as opposed to professional interpreters; and (c) both stress application over intellectual interpretation (Murray, 2000).

The importance of experience creates an ontological and epistemological difference between Anabaptist theology and liberation theology. Ontological commitments of liberation theology do not view God as being most fully revealed through Jesus in the Scriptures. Rather, God is revealed through the experience of the oppressed (Berryman, 1987). Epistemological commitments of liberation theology

viewed experience as the primary way of knowing (E. Taylor & Cranton, 2012). Mezirow (1991) claimed that transformative learning theory was based on constructivist assumptions claiming that meaning was constructed through experience and did not exist as an absolute truth outside of the self (Mezirow, 1991). However, within Christian theism, Anabaptists hold experience as subordinate to the prime reality of the infinite-personal God (Sire, 2009) and subordinate to a Christocentric reading of Scripture (Murray, 2000). Anabaptists hold these commitments even to the point that “hermeneutically they cannot ignore Christ as example, teacher, and redeemer” (Murray, 2000, p. 78). In Anabaptist epistemology, experience is tested and corrected in light of Jesus who is seen as the primary example for ethics as well as the primary agent for salvation (Murray, 2000).

The work of reflection within transformative learning is understood in this study as “the science of reflecting on how a word or event in a past time and culture may be understood and become existentially meaningful in our present situation” (Murray, 2000, p. 7). In terms of how knowledge is constructed, E. Taylor (2008) explained a cultural-spiritual view of transformative learning that fostered a “narrative transformation—engaging storytelling on a personal and social level” (E. Taylor, 2008, p. 9). This is a process of assisting a learner to share stories of experience and revising new stories (E. Taylor, 2008). According to E. Taylor and Cranton (2012), this view “is not limited to intellectual and logical dimensions alone, nor is it necessarily a linear progression. Rather, it is a spiraling, creative, collaborative, and intertwining journey of discovery” (E. Taylor & Cranton, 2012, p. 236). They go on to claim that transformative learning that partners with the spiritual aspects of the learner’s identity, results in cultivating critical

openness, engaging the whole person, stimulating critical thinking through dialogue, appreciating diverse perspectives, and dwelling with questions (E. Taylor & Cranton, 2012). A significant implication of this narrative approach to the construction of knowledge is a reflective practice within Anabaptist ontology. Anabaptists place great importance on their meta-narrative for testing and correcting their personal narrative.

To summarize how the liberation theology roots of transformative learning are juxtaposed with Anabaptist theology, Murray (2000) claimed:

The contribution of Anabaptist hermeneutics as a conversation-partner with liberation theology is threefold: (1) it endorses important aspects of liberation hermeneutics through its testimony that those aspects are not related solely to the context in which liberation theology is developed, but has parallels in a quite different historical context; (2) it provides a helpful basis for critical analysis of some aspects of liberation hermeneutics that needs to be addressed by liberation theologians; (3) it may provide a lens through which European interpreters could look at liberation hermeneutics with greater understanding and appreciation. (Murray, 2000, pp. 237-238)

This juxtaposition alignment provides a lens through which to understand the following sections on critical self-reflection, perspective transformation, and instrumental and communicative learning.

### **Critical Self-reflection**

The concept of Transformative Learning (Mezirow, 1978) was built on the work of several scholars who laid the theoretical foundation for reflection. Dewey (1933) provided a foundation for understanding adult learning when he defined reflection as “assessing the grounds for one’s beliefs” (p. 9). Within adult learning, the role of critical reflection in terms of addressing a problem was found in Kuhn’s (1962) work with the paradigm shift in learning. Mezirow (1990) claimed, “By far the most significant learning experience in adulthood involves critical self-reflection—reassessing the way we pose

problems and reassessing our own orientation to perceiving, knowing, believing, feeling, and acting” (p. 4). E. Taylor and Cranton (2012) claim that transformative learning is the process of critically engaging the values, beliefs, and assumptions passed on by family, community, and culture.

### **Perspective Transformation**

Paulo Freire (1970) also influenced the early formation of transformative learning. His work grew out of a notion that people need to find ways to think for themselves rather than simply retaining information from teachers (Kitchenham, 2008). He developed a definition of *conscientization* as “learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions—developing a critical awareness—so that individuals can take action against the oppressive elements of reality” (Freire, 1970, p. 19). The work of Freire greatly influenced Mezirow in his understanding of how reflecting could change one’s perspective. Mezirow (1990) defined perspective transformation as:

The process of becoming critically aware of how we perceive, understand, and feel about our world; of reformulating these assumptions to permit a more inclusive, discriminating, permeable, and integrative perspective; and of making decisions or otherwise acting upon these new understandings. (p. 5)

Reflection, as the essential part of transformative learning, refers to becoming aware of and assessing tacit or implicit assumptions (Mezirow, 1991). Emotions and safe relationships are associated with the process of reflection because becoming aware of our assumptions and emotional responses in transformation is often an intensely threatening experience (Mezirow, 2000). There is an emotional dimension to transformation, which goes hand in hand with reflecting on one’s assumptions (Mälkki, 2010). This emotional dimension is characterized by the term “edge-emotions.” Mälkki (2010) refers to the



unpleasant emotions which arise at the edges of the comfort zone; that is, when the meaning perspective becomes challenged. According to Mälkki (2010) examples of this may be easily found in history of science:

New and revolutionary theories have been strongly opposed by the scientific establishment. In these cases, it could be said that “‘reason’” was exploited in order to bring about feelings of safety and to maintain the comfort zone, rather than aiming at a thorough understanding of the situation. (p. 55)

According to Mezirow (1991), uncomfortable feelings are aroused when meaning-making within the meaning perspective is not possible, or when long-held beliefs are challenged. Additionally, Mälkki (2010) suggests that “as a prerequisite to becoming aware of and assessing the problematic assumptions in reflection, one needs to recognize and accept the edge-emotions so as to become aware of, assess, and explore their bases” (p. 56). Mälkki urges further research to explore the challenges of the social dimension to give more specific consideration of issues in terms of facilitating reflection.

### **Instrumental and Communicative Learning**

Within transformative learning theory, Habermas (1984) identified instrumental learning and communicative learning as two levels of learning. Instrumental learning is a way to control and manipulate the environment or other people (task-oriented problem solving to improve performance). Communicative learning is learning what others mean when they communicate with you (Habermas, 1984). Communicative learning stresses the importance of people communicating with each other in an effort to come to a common understanding (Kitchenham, 2008). In response to this, Mezirow (1990) identified the central function of reflection as that of “validating what is known. In communicative learning, meaning is validated through critical discourse” (Mezirow,

1990, p. 6). The understanding of this discourse references a “special kind of dialogue in which we focus on content and attempt to justify beliefs by giving and defending reasons and by examining the evidence for and against competing viewpoints” (Mezirow, 1994, p. 225).

### **Summary of Transformative Learning**

This review of transformative learning theory provides the framework to understand the learning that took place in this study. Within the limits of Anabaptist ontological commitments, experience is tested and corrected in light of Jesus. Given what the literature says about these issues, in studying leadership in collaborative settings, Anabaptist ontological commitments provide an important context for transformative learning in collaborative environments where leadership development occurs.

### **Servant Leadership Theory**

To better understand collaborative environments, this review of the literature now turns toward servant leadership theory and its emphasis on growth in community. Specifically, it focuses on the work of Greenleaf (1991), the characteristics listed by various models, and the potential impact on the community.

Robert Greenleaf’s (1991) seminal work, *The Servant as Leader*, first introduced the term Servant Leader. Greenleaf (1991) explained that “the great leader is seen as servant first, and that simple fact is the key to his greatness” (Greenleaf, 1991, p. 21). Furthermore, servant leaders spent time listening, praising, and encouraging (Blanchard, 1995).

Several models have been constructed to better understand and define Servant Leadership. Spears (1995) published the earliest model with 10 characteristics explaining the concept. Other influential models (Laub et al., 1999; Russell & Stone, 2002) have been created based on variations of these characteristics. More recently, van Dierendonck (2011) reviewed earlier models which collectively included 44 characteristics and outlined six that brought order to the understanding.

Servant leaders, as defined by van Dierendonck's (2011) six characteristics, "empower and develop people, show humility, are authentic, accept people for who they are, provide direction, and are stewards who work for the good of the whole" (p. 1232). Through developing and empowering others, value is placed on the realization of each person's abilities (Greenleaf, 1998). Humility is present in a servant leader's approach to relying on insight or expertise of others (van Dierendonck, 2011). According to Harter (2002), authenticity has to do with being transparent in a way that reveals the true self. Interpersonal acceptance is the result of empathizing with another person's perspective in an atmosphere of trust that nurtures the freedom to take risks and be accepted (Ferch, 2005). Servant leaders also provide direction with an appropriate degree of accountability based on the abilities, needs, and input (van Dierendonck, 2011). Stewardship is the willingness to share in the responsibility of others or of the institution (Spears, 1995). These characteristics help to explain the altruistic approach to serving others or enable them to also develop as leaders (Bryman et al., 2011)

According to Laub et al. (1999), servant leadership is inclusive and promotes community among teams that grow into stronger collaborative relationships. In focusing on follower performance and growth, Northouse (2012) claims that servant leaders have

an expected outcome of greater self-actualization for their followers. As each person in the group gains a greater self-actualization, there is an increase in team effectiveness (van Dierendonck, 2011).

This review of servant leadership describes how the altruistic approach of serving others contributes to the leadership development that takes place in collaborative environments, which is central to this study. For Anabaptists, an ethic of valuing the community is a defining characteristic as is striving to be servant leaders. Servant leadership contributes to this study by distinguishing between leader development versus leadership development and the dueling interest of personal gain versus the common cause.

### Collaboration

Collaboration is a key aspect of leadership development. Understood in terms of an interactive process of “shared leadership,” collaboration offers a way of learning. Leadership development needs to encompass these elements of learning to better prepare leaders for collaborative environments.

Collaboration (Dooner, Mandzuk, & Clifton, 2008; James, 2007; Rosenfield & Gravois, 1996; Rubin, 2009; Slater, 2005; Tapscott & Williams, 2008; Zaretsky, 2004) is becoming a popular focus for research in educational and organizational development. Earlier research (Finch, 1977; Gulowsen, 1972; J. Taylor, 1979; Thorsrud, 1975) suggested that groups that shared leadership among its members indicated an increase in collaboration, shifting from manager/worker relationships to collaborative workgroups. In the mid-2000s, some studies on collaboration (Pearce, Manz, & Sims, 2008; Sohail & Cavill, 2007) focused on shared leadership as a way to deter corruption by providing

checks and balances to the executive leaders. Jameson (2007) indicated that shifting to a team leadership approach rather than an individual leadership approach promoted the opportunity for synergistic collaboration within shared leadership spaces and resulted in a more productive work environment (Jameson, 2007). A more recent study by Pearce, Manz, and Sims (2009) focuses on the positive impact that collaboration has on team performance. For example, it can be useful to redesign workflow. Shared leadership also can work in conjunction with more traditional, hierarchical leadership to develop a more flexible, dynamic, robust and responsive leadership platform (Pearce et al., 2009).

In another study, Wood and Gray (1991) claimed collaboration occurs when a group of autonomous stakeholders of a problem engage in an interactive process, using shared rules, norms, and structures, to act or decide on issues related to that domain. An interactive process requires a change-oriented relationship with all stakeholders (Wood & Gray, 1991) and results in greater achievement (Goddard, Goddard, & Tschannen-Moran, 2007). This interactive process is similar to Freire's (1970) claim that knowledge is attained through a process of inquiry and creation where a group of people exchange ideas, discuss problems from various perspectives, and construct meaning together.

Additionally, Vygotsky (1994) posited that through collaboration with peers, individuals internalize their learning during adolescence and early adulthood. Individuals develop to a greater potential by entering the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) by learning under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky's definition of ZPD is "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in

collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). Gordon (2008) claimed that ZPD “enables us to realize that human learning, development, and knowledge are all embedded in a particular social and cultural context in which people exist and grow” (Gordon, 2008, p. 324). He also stated that “cultivating the spiritual dimension of our beings has to do with forging connections with something larger than our egos, such as relations with other human beings, with the world of nature, with a literary text, or with a cause aimed at making our world a better place to live” (Gordon, 2008, p. 322).

Building on the values of group discernment in an Anabaptist context and group reflection in transformative learning theory, collaboration contributes a key aspect of leadership development. Collaboration contributes to leadership development when developing leaders can identify the gap between their actual level of development and the level of more capable peers or mentors. Leadership development needs to include these elements of learning to better prepare leaders for collaborative environments. Even in more traditional, hierarchical leadership environments, collaboration as an agent of leadership development can contribute to a more flexible, dynamic, robust and responsive leadership platform.

## **Identity Development**

### **Emerging Adulthood**

Because of a particular maturation process that emerging adults are undergoing, leadership development is closely tied to the issue of identity development. According to Erikson (1968), the development of an identity during adolescence is a slow process of ego growth where childhood identifiers are shifted and subordinated as new identity is configured. Identity development is driven by exploration and commitment (Marcia,

1980). To describe the phenomenon of identity development, Marcia, Waterman, Matteson, Archer, and Orlofsky (1993) developed the ego identity status model. Marcia et al.'s model is based on the work of Erikson (1968) who noted that “the ability to make commitments is a central feature of optimal identity formation, and that an identity crisis or exploration phase is an important element in the process of undertaking identity commitments” (Årseth, Kroger, Martinussen, & Marcia, 2009, p. 3). The model has four qualitatively different statuses of identity resolution: identity achieved, moratorium, foreclosed, and diffused (Årseth et al., 2009). Table 1 provides definitions of each status.

Table 1

*Marcia's (1993) Four Qualitatively Different Statuses of Identity Resolution*

| <b>Status</b>     | <b>Description</b>  |
|-------------------|---|
| Identity Achieved | Individuals have experienced a phase of exploring several possibilities before committing to various identity defining domains. |
| Moratorium        | Individuals are in the process of exploration, but their commitments are vague.   |
| Foreclosed        | Individuals are committed, but have not gone through a period of active exploration on their own terms.                         |
| Diffused          | Individuals are neither exploring nor committed to any identity defining roles or values.                                       |

Within this model, Marcia (1980) is highlighting the importance of exploring various roles before making commitments about the future. To make their way through the world, individuals need to become more aware of their own strengths and

weaknesses. To increase this awareness, individuals need to develop their “self-structure—an internal, self-constructed, dynamic organization of drives, abilities, beliefs, and individual history” (Marcia, 1980, p. 159).

According to Erikson (1968), responsive feedback from peers is important in the process of a strong sense of identity. Emerging adulthood, a developmental stage after adolescence, during the period from the late teens through about the mid-20s, is time for identity exploration and development (Arnett & Tanner, 2006). As emerging adults explore their identity, they are shaped by the responsive feedback from their peers. Those who receive support gain a stronger sense of self. However, those who do not may become confused about themselves and the future.

During the college years, emerging adults experience the moratorium status because identity formation is expected through the decisions that are required such as commitment to a major (Smart & Paulsen, 2011). The moratorium status is the least stable because it is naturally a period with many transitions (Kroger, Martinussen, & Marcia, 2010). However, in a recent meta-analysis of identity status, Kroger et al. (2010) found strong support for claims made by both Erikson (1968) and Marcia et al. (1993) that “for those who did undergo identity status transitions in late adolescence and young adulthood, progressive change was more than twice as likely as regressive change” (Kroger et al., 2010, p. 696).

Research on identity tends to focus on outcomes of identity formation by the individual rather than on the structural and social elements (Duerden, Taniguchi, & Widmer, 2012; Lerner, 1998; Schachter & Ventura, 2008). Carroll and Levy (2010) focused their work on understanding identity as being socially constructed. They built on



Cunliffe's (2009) notion that relationships are where new ideas of truth are found rather than in situations. Carroll and Levy (2010) went on to integrate the work of Cunliffe and Linstead (2009) by highlighting the ways that social experience is structured by the dominate discourses into which we are born, such as our ways of seeing, thinking, and speaking. Carroll and Levy (2010) claimed that these dominate discourses could be engaged through a social constructivist approach to leadership that leads to emancipation from perspective-limiting assumptions. Leadership development based on a social construction approach to identity development enlarges rather than reduces identity options (Carroll & Levy, 2010).

A recent study by Johnson et al. (2011) examined the identity exploration of emerging adults who were working at church camps. The study identified the camp setting as an example of what Erikson (1968) described as a moratorium environment to facilitate the process of identity exploration. Living in close proximity, while working together day and night, the staff had time for many conversations about roles and commitment (Johnson et al., 2011).

Identity development and how it is shaped by the feedback from peers and able mentors is a central issue in exploring leadership development of emerging adults in collaborative environments. The camp setting can function as a moratorium environment by providing a lens to examine how the participants engaged the process of identity exploration. As emerging adults explored their identity in collaborative environments, they are shaped by the responsive feedback from their peers.

## Emotional Intelligence

Because identity development is a critical issue in focus for developing leaders, it is important to consider multiple dimensions of the identity formation process. To understand these dimensions, this review summarizes recent research in Emotional Intelligence theory. Emotional Intelligence (EQ) (Goleman, 1995, 1998; Salovey & Mayer, 1990) provides an important understanding of self within identity development. Background theories are reviewed followed by a brief section for each of the four components of EQ.

### **Background of Emotional Intelligence**

Learning always includes three dimensions: the cognitive dimension of knowledge and skills, the emotional dimension of feelings and motivation, and the social dimension of communication and cooperation, all of which are embedded in a context in society (Illeris, 2004). Goleman (1998) claimed that EQ is about good communication skills and the ability to interact. Mezirow (2003) stated that “qualities of emotional intelligence . . . are obvious assets for developing the ability of adults to assess alternative beliefs and participate fully and freely in critical-dialectical discourse” (Mezirow, 2003, p. 60). Emotional Intelligence, first presented by Salovey and Mayer (1990), could be simply defined as knowing and managing the emotions in yourself and in others (Goleman, 2001).

The Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test was developed as an ability-based assessment of emotional intelligence and measured a person’s “capacity to reason with emotions and emotional signals, and the capacity of emotion to enhance thought” (Mayer & Salovey, 2007, p. 2). The four components based on Goleman’s

(2001) work are: self-awareness, self-regulation, social awareness, and relationship management.

### **Self-awareness**

Goleman (1995) claimed that “the ability to monitor feelings from moment to moment is crucial to psychological insight and self-understanding” (p. 43). As people engage in the discourse of critical reflection, they need a greater self-awareness. After a qualitative study on the EQ of mental health nurses, Akerjordet and Severinsson (2004) claimed that self-awareness proved to be a meaningful element of emotional intelligence.

Self-awareness relates to one’s ability to observe oneself and recognize feelings as they happened. Although self-awareness is a difficult area to develop, Johari’s window (Ingham & Luft, 1955) is a tool that addresses areas which hinder one’s ability to see self honestly through sharing and receiving feedback from others (Stedman & Andenoro, 2007). The tool is based on four quadrants that are compared to window panes. The panes represent (a) the Public Arena that is known to self and to others (upper left); (b) the Facade that is known to self but unknown to others (lower left); (c) the Unknown that is unknown to self and to others (lower right); (d) the Blind that is known to others but unknown to self (upper right). The panes are separated by adjustable lines to increase or decrease areas of self that are revealed similar to opening shades on a window. The window of self-understanding is expanded through the process of reflection and feedback from others (Lowy & Hood, 2004). High self-awareness is considered to be the foundation from which all other aspects of emotional intelligence emerge (Weisinger, 1998).

Neuman's (1996) 2-year longitudinal study on the development of critical reflection in a leadership program found that a prerequisite to developing a critical reflective capacity (critical reflection and critical self-reflection) is acquiring the ability to recognize, acknowledge, and process feelings and emotions as integral aspects of learning from experience (E. Taylor, 2001). For the purposes of changing one's meaning structures as part of transformative learning, an increase in self-awareness is triggered by working with these feelings and emotions.

### **Self-management**

Self-management, or self-regulation, is the process of maintaining standards of honesty and integrity through self-control and trustworthiness (Mezirow, 2000). Joseph and Newman (2010) further define the role of self-regulation or self-control by describing two senses in which the term emotional intelligence is used:

- (a) as a narrow, theoretically specified set of constructs pertaining to the recognition and control of personal emotion (called ability-based EQ), and (b) as an umbrella term for a broad array of constructs that are connected only by their non-redundancy with cognitive intelligence (called mixed-based EQ). (p. 55)

Côté, DeCelles, McCarthy, Van Kleef, and Hideg (2011) propose that “a core facet of emotional intelligence—emotion-regulation knowledge—could further both evil and good ends by strengthening associations between personality traits and both interpersonal deviance . . . and pro-social behavior” (pp. 1073-1074). This knowledge of self-management of emotions helps individuals to identify the most effective strategies to generate and nurture goal-conducive emotions (Salovey & Mayer, 1990).

As a way of highlighting the importance of understanding emotion, Joseph and Newman (2010) expected the ability to understand emotion to completely mediate the

relationship between the ability to perceive emotion and the ability to regulate emotion, because individuals are dealing with a conscious emotion regulation process. In terms of motivation to engage others, Stedman and Andenoro (2007) implied that when regulating emotions to reach a goal, individuals who were confident in their reasoning ability were motivated by engagement with others. Within critical reflection, self-regulation of emotions creates the possibility to overcome the “challenges and negations of our conventional criteria of self-assessment [that] are always fraught with threat and strong emotion” (Mezirow, 1990, p. 4).

### **Social Awareness**

Personal and professional success in life was historically researched within social intelligence (Thorndike, 1920). Social awareness is a factor in determining the quality of one’s relationships. Nelson and Low (2011) defined social awareness as “the ability to choose the appropriate emotional, social, and physical distance during verbal and nonverbal interactions with others and to affect and influence others in positive ways” (p. 74). Goleman (2001) identified three competencies of social awareness: empathy, service, and organizational awareness. The *Empathy* competence gives people an astute awareness of others’ emotions, concerns, and needs. The *Service* competence is the ability to identify a client’s or customer’s often unstated needs and concerns and then match them to products or services. *Organizational Awareness* is the ability to read the currents of emotions and political realities in groups. These three competencies are a learned capability based on emotional intelligence that results in the potential of outstanding performance at work (Goleman, 2001).

## **Relationship Management**

Hill (2004) suggested managers must accept the importance of relationship management skills and develop their emotional intelligence by learning about themselves, being able to cope with stress, and also coping with their own and others' emotions. For relationship management, Goleman (2001) listed eight competencies. They included: influence, communication, conflict management, visionary leadership, change catalyst, building bonds, collaboration, and teamwork.

A recent study by Engle and Nehrt (2011) indicated that the relationships among conceptual ability and emotional intelligence and relationship management were significant, with the implication that even stronger conceptual and emotional intelligence abilities led to stronger relationship management skills. Effective team building and the need to partner with larger numbers of people across organizational and national boundaries required the ability to build and manage relationships across what may be very different cultures.

Emotional intelligence is about good communication skills and the ability to interact. Within this study, EQ provides a lens to examine how adults assess alternative beliefs and participate fully and freely in critical-dialectical discourse. A prerequisite to developing a critical reflection is acquiring the ability to recognize, acknowledge, and process feelings and emotions. Furthermore, the three competencies of social awareness—empathy, service, and organizational awareness—are in line with components of servant leaders. Exhibiting a servant philosophy can improve the quality of decisions when decision-makers who practice the value of empathy can foresee the impact of their decisions before implementation (Hess & Bacigalupo, 2011).

## **Summary**

This study was fundamentally about leadership development. Each of the topics in this chapter reviewed literature that summarized the research literature that speaks to the way leadership development needs to continue to evolve to address the challenges people face when working with and leading others. This review of Anabaptist theology highlighted Christ-centeredness, biblical authority, communal discernment, and compassion. The review gave tremendous insight into the theological culture that influenced the context of this study. These salient points provided a catalyst for growth for the participants. The alignment of liberation theology and Anabaptist theology as conversation partners provided a lens through which to understand the transformative learning literature on critical self-reflection, perspective transformation, and instrumental and communicative learning.

This study dealt with how the participants used reflection to become more aware of their assumptions about leadership and how they worked with others to permit a more inclusive, discriminating, permeable, and integrative perspective. Servant leadership contributed to this study in distinguishing between leader development vs. leadership development and the dueling interest of personal gain vs. the common cause. The review of collaboration added to this study by building on the group discernment of Anabaptist and the group reflection of transformative learning. Theological and personal learning were examined in this study by discovering how the participants entered the gap between their actual level of development and understanding and the level of more capable peers or mentors.

The review of identity development informed this study of important elements of emerging adults exploring their identity and how it could be shaped by the responsive feedback from their peers. Viewing camp as a moratorium environment gave a lens to examine how the participants engaged the process of identity exploration. Emotional intelligence was about good communication skills and the ability to interact. Within this study, EQ provided a way to examine how adults assess alternative beliefs and participate fully and freely in critical-dialectical discourse. A prerequisite to developing a critical reflection was acquiring the ability to recognize, acknowledge, and process feelings and emotions.



## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of how the experiences of emerging adults serving at a camp helped shape them as leaders. This chapter is divided into eight major sections: (a) research design; (b) self as the research instrument; (c) purposeful sampling; (d) data collection; (e) data analysis; (f) trustworthiness/internal validity; (g) generalizability and (h) institutional review board.

#### **Research Design**

The primary research design used in this study was a qualitative design (Creswell, 2012; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Merriam, 2009). The study gathered data using a case study method (Berg, 2004; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009, 2011) in the Mennonite camp setting. The data were gathered through the participants' stories of their experiences using narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2010; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Creswell, 2012). This was the methodology used to answer the main research question: How do adults who served at summer camps as emerging adults describe the experiences that helped shape them as leaders? The next section gives a rationale for using a qualitative design and a multiple-case approach.

## Qualitative Research

The key characteristics of qualitative research are (a) the researchers strive to understand how people make sense of their experience, (b) the researcher is the primary instrument, (c) the process is inductive, and (d) the product is richly descriptive (Merriam, 2002). Qualitative research attempts to understand and make sense of phenomena from the participants' perspective (Merriam, 2002).

A beneficial definition of this qualitative research study is Denzin and Lincoln's (2005):

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. (p. 3)

Therefore, the goal of this qualitative research design was to better understand the world of those who served at a Mennonite camp as emerging adults with representations that described the leadership development that took place during that time in their lives.

## Case-Study Research

The case study method "allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events" (Yin, 2009, p. 4). A case study is a form of research methodology producing an intensive description and analysis of a phenomenon, social unit, or system bounded by time or place (Berg, 2004; Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 1998, 2002; Stake, 1995). The phenomenon for this study was the ways that emerging adults grew as leaders in the collaborative camp setting. Data analysis was conducted for the themes, patterns, and issues that resulted from a detailed description of the setting and participants.

Case studies are pertinent when the research questions are either descriptive or explanatory (Yin, 2011). The case study approach was selected to best describe and analyze the leadership development of emerging adults during the time that they served at camp. This method allowed for deeper probing into critical life changes, resulting in a more accurate way of identifying the influences leading to such change.

### Narrative Inquiry

To better understand the stories within each case that was studied, narrative inquiry enhanced the process through the telling of stories. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) offered an early perspective on the methodological use of stories:

The main claim for the use of narrative in educational research is that humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives. The study of narrative, therefore, is the study of the ways humans experience the world. This general notion translates into the view that education is the construction and reconstruction of personal and social stories; teachers and learners are storytellers and characters in their own and other's stories. (p. 2)

Ultimately, the narrative combined views from the participants' lives with those of the researcher's life, culminating in a collaborative narrative (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

### Self as the Research Instrument

As the research instrument, I was able to use my skills of listening and asking intentional questions to reveal each person's unique story. In addition, my general awareness of the camp setting enlightened my approach to the interviews. I have been connected to church camp ministry in a variety ways: 10 years of attending as a child at four different camps, three summers serving as a counselor, 5 years as an adult chaperone during annual retreats, and 5 years as a year-round Program Director. There were important milestones that were attributed to each of these experiences at camp that

influenced me throughout my life. However, two of the most significant changes were experienced as a camp counselor during my college years. These changes consisted of: (a) developing the skill of facilitating group activities, and (b) learning to process my relationships with the children assigned to my cabin as well as with those staff members with whom I served during the summer.

The first significant change involved developing the skill of facilitating group activities. I was never comfortable speaking in front of groups prior to working at a camp as a young adult. The idea of giving direction to a group or making announcements to others made me very nervous. My fear was that I could not articulate a message that would be helpful for the audience to follow.

This uneasiness began to change when I worked in close proximity to people at camp, who appeared to be able to facilitate group activities with purpose and with ease. These people inspired me to develop this skill. I experimented with facilitating group activities by giving mealtime instructions to groups of 30-40 children. After observing other leaders, I began to lead games and activities that lasted 1 hour for groups of 60-80 youth.

After avoiding the risk of trying out the role of facilitator previously, I was finally able to take a risk because it was modeled well. I felt comfortable being honest about my limitations. I increased my self-confidence and my ability to lead others. Furthermore, I was able to bridge the gap between my perceived inability to facilitate group activity and the actual performance of such act because of collaboration with more capable peers.

The second significant change in my confidence as a leader had to do with learning to process issues in my relationships. Every morning, I met with the other counselors to review the previous day. At first, these meetings involved reporting details about the schedule and recounting stories of being with our campers. The reporting of details eventually shifted to collaborating with each other as we processed the impact or potential impact that each staff member had on both campers and staff. I became more aware of myself and others. This awareness led to being more intentional about how I managed relationships and my approach to leading activities throughout each day. I was significantly changed by learning to process my relationships and, therefore, became more aware of myself. The group of staff with whom I collaborated each day helped me to explore alternative perspectives as I managed my relationships. I began to act on new perspectives as I transformed the way that I developed as a leader.

Because the camp environment was so essential to the formation of my own leadership development, I wanted to delve into the experience of others to understand how the camp staff experience forms the leadership of others in collaborative environments.

### **Purposeful Sampling**

Purposeful sampling was used. This method allowed me to enter into information-rich cases to yield insight and understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). Selection of the research sample is purposeful in qualitative research, and in this study convenience sampling was used (Patton, 1990). The participants were chosen with assistance from the camp director based on availability of contact information and their potential availability to be interviewed. Typical sampling

was used to describe what was typical to those unfamiliar with the cases (Creswell, 2011).

The criterion for this purposeful sampling directly reflected the purpose for this study and guided the identification of information-rich cases. The primary criteria were:

1. The participants served at a Mennonite camp for at least two summers.
2. The participants served at a camp as an emerging adult.
3. The participants were chosen with an effort to create a balance between gender and ethnicity.

## **Data Collection**

### **Interviews**

Interviews were conducted to gather the stories of the participants' experiences. Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) explained interviews as a method that "elicits in-depth, context-rich personal accounts, perceptions and perspectives" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 195). Within the interviews, I used the life history method because it "enhanced participants' critical thinking, reflection, and depth of response," and "encouraged participants to extract meaning from their own experience" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 195).

### **Interview Questions**

As part of my previous job as a camp Program Director, I conducted Exit Interviews with each staff member at the end of each summer. A portion of those interviews included asking the staff members to write down the most significant change that they experienced during that summer as a result of serving at camp. A summary of these answers has guided the development of the following interview questions:

1. Tell me when you worked at camp and what your role was.
2. Describe what led you to consider serving at camp.
3. Describe the camping environment—how did the staff work together?
4. Describe any experiences at camp that changed the way you work with others.
5. What were the motivations for you to interact with the staff or motivations not to interact?
6. How was leadership practiced at the camp? Did you consider yourself a leader? Why or why not?
7. In what ways is being part of a summer camp staff significant to your own growth and development?
8. If you think of your life as a story, what role did serving at summer camp play in your story?
9. Describe any other ways that your experience at camp has impacted you today.
10. Please share any other camp stories that you think would be helpful. Are there any other questions that I should have asked?

### **Interview Procedure**

The procedures were conducted to describe the experience of emerging adults ages 19 and older who served at camp through telephone, video conferencing, or face-to-face sessions. The sessions were audio recorded and then transcribed. In addition to taking notes during each interview, I logged my reflections on each interview in a research journal. I then reviewed the transcription with the participant to verify my understanding.

## Researcher Journal

A researcher journal (D. Thomas, 1993) was utilized to store initial observations after each interview, ideas to improve the process of interviewing, and other thoughts that developed throughout the study. The practice of reflective writing not only documented elements of the research process, but also articulated and reflected on the learning of the researcher (D. Thomas, 1993). Janesick (1999) claimed that journal writing was a way for researchers to refine the understanding of the role of the researcher through reflection and writing, much like an artist might do. Thus at the end of each interview I recorded my reflections and noted significant thoughts that emerged from the interview. These elements of journal writing were formative in my research process as I refined my understanding and confirmed my train of thought with my initial reflections.

## Data Analysis

As a narrative study, the data were analyzed for the story they had to tell, for the chronology of unfolding events, and for turning points or epiphanies (Creswell, 2012). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) posited a three-dimensional space approach including interaction (personal and social), continuity (past, present, and future), and situation (physical places).

Bloomberg and Volpe Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) explained the process of managing, organizing, and synthesis of the data:

1. Managing the large volume of data requires reducing it in a meaningful way by identifying significant patterns and constructing a framework for communicating the essence of what the data revealed.



2. Organizing the data using visuals is useful for organizing thoughts for the researcher and the reader.

3. Synthesis of the data is the process of pulling everything together to describe the findings, interpret and attach meaning to them, and synthesize throughout the discussion (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008).

Therefore the interviews were transcribed and imported into the online software Dedoose. Initial codes were created and applied to each transcription. Next, to classify the codes into themes and categories, the excerpts were reviewed multiple times and consolidated or renamed. In addition, the data were used to interpret the larger meaning of the story. As a result, the narration was presented with a focus on processes, theories, and unique and general features of the life of the participant (Creswell, 2012).

### **Trustworthiness/Internal Validity**

My goal was to conduct valid research that clearly reflected the world being described by the participants. According to the research, trustworthiness and internal credibility of a study is developed when the researcher (a) states their researcher bias from the outset of the study, (b) conducts peer debriefing with colleagues to question assumptions about study, (c) engages in member checking with the participants of the study for accuracy of the data, (d) uses rich thick descriptions of the data to help readers make decisions about transferability, (e) triangulates the data to build corroborating evidence, and (f) includes any data that does not confirm the themes to increase transparency of the study (Creswell, 2011, 2012; Erlandson, Skipper, Allen, & Harris, 1993; Guba & Lincoln, 1985). Each of these items was addressed to increase internal validity. Researcher bias was addressed in the Self as Researcher section. By articulating

my own experience in the camp setting, researcher bias was identified as an asset to understanding the context. Also by stating my bias I was transparent with my colleagues who reviewed my research. As these colleagues reviewed my work, they discussed my assumptions and asked questions to better understand my process of being true to the stories being told. After the interviews were transcribed, I confirmed their accuracy with each participant. I then made adjustments or corrections that were requested. I continued to interview additional participants until I reached saturation of data resulting in rich, thick descriptions of the experiences in the camp setting. Upon reaching 11 participants, it was evident that the types of stories were being repeated and not many new ideas were being expressed.

### **Generalizability**

Generalizability is described by researchers as the process of learning through skills, images, and ideas for readers to transfer the newly acquired knowledge (Eisner, 1998). “Although qualitative researchers do not expect their findings to be generalizable to all other settings, it is likely that the lessons learned in one setting might be useful to others” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 78). Flyvbjerg (2006) claimed that “formal generalization was over-valued as a source of scientific development, whereas ‘the force of example’ was underestimated” (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 228). Therefore the examples given through this study will be generalizable to other settings on the basis of the lessons learned from the findings. The information gathered in this study described how the elements of leadership development in a Mennonite camp informed efforts to better prepare people to work well together.

### **Institutional Review Board**

I submitted an Application for Approval of Research Involving Human Subjects Form to the IRB and received approval before beginning my study. Within this application was an overview of the study as the Research Protocol Document for the IRB. Also within this application was an informed consent to be signed by all participants before conducting interviews.

### **Summary**

In summary, this chapter outlined the methodology that was used in this study. A multiple-case research design using a narrative inquiry was used with participants chosen by purposeful sampling. The question for this study focused on how adults who served at summer camps as emerging adults describe the experiences that helped shape them as leaders.

## CHAPTER IV

### ANALYSIS OF STORIES

#### **Introduction**

This chapter provides an analysis of the stories of 11 people who served as emerging adults at a summer camp in the Midwest. Through the narratives of their lived experiences, each former summer staff member gave meaning and understanding to how their experience shaped them as leaders.

The first section introduces the 11 participants. The criterion for this purposeful sampling directly reflected the purpose for this study and guided the identification of information-rich cases. The primary criteria was (a) the participants have served at a Mennonite camp for at least two summers, (b) the participants have served at a camp as an emerging adult, and (c) the participants were chosen with an effort to create a balance between gender and ethnicity.

The next three sections provide a description of the participants' experiences. As a narrative study, the data are analyzed for the story they tell, the chronology of unfolding events, and the turning points or epiphanies that happened (Creswell, 2012). The sections, Camp as a Collaborative Environment, Reflections on Camp Experience, and Reflections in Current Roles as Leaders, describe the participants' experiences of leadership development in a collaborative environment. The section, Camp as a Collaborative Environment, describes how the camp culture formed their experience through Christ-

centered with Anabaptist Distinctives, Leadership Approach, and Individual Readiness. The next section, Reflections on Camp Experience, describes their actual story during their time of service at camp through the Work Environment, Team Elements, and Learning. The last section, Reflections in Current Roles as Leaders, describes the ongoing reflection regardless of how long it has been since the end of their service at camp. The reflection in their current experience is described in terms of Leadership Development and Identity Development.

### **Participants**

#### **Kevin**

Growing up near Camp Menno Haven, Kevin's family had a history of many rich experiences. His home congregation was very involved with camp activities, and often the summer staff would attend church with Kevin. After hearing many stories from several of his family members about serving at camp, Kevin followed in their footsteps. First, he spent two full summers serving as a camp counselor. Next, he returned as an assistant to the Program Director while participating in a scholarship program through his college to explore camping as a vocation. Later, he spent a full season as the Summer Program Director. He then returned after graduating from college as a volunteer while giving leadership to the local school play. Kevin's work with youth at camp and growth in leadership was formative in his pursuit of a career in music education.

#### **Kenneth**

Kenneth also grew up down the road from the camp and frequently visited Camp Menno Haven recreationally with his family and for church activities. He had been a

camper there most of his childhood. Camp was a big part of his early life so he naturally wanted to continue the camp experience. During the time at camp, Kenneth became grounded and learned to pray by himself, with the help of one of his counselors. Kenneth returned after high school for three summers in leadership positions with an inspiration to help create transformational moments for other children.

#### Sandra

Sandra's motivation to serve three summers as a camp counselor came from being a camper herself from second grade until the end of high school. Some years, she even attended twice during the summer. Sandra had a desire to continue her camp experience because the camp atmosphere helped her feel close to God in many different ways. During the time at camp, she was responsible for kids of all ages. Not only was she able to define why working with kids was so important to her, she also began to understand why those relationships with kids mattered to her. For Sandra, this awareness came from one-on-one conversations with her counselor at a campfire. She was able to expand more upon building those relationships and clarifying perspective of why she wanted to become a teacher.

#### Brian

Brian's journey of working several years at camp started as a Menno Haven camper. In high school, his church youth group would encourage the youth to volunteer and attend winter retreats together. It has been part of his life all throughout his growing-up years. Brian was also inspired by an older sibling who worked at camp. These formative experiences led Brian to spend two summers on staff. He was first a cabin

counselor and, as his leadership grew, he served the second summer as a Program Assistant. Brian's involvement expanded after he graduated from college and he was hired as the full-time Program Director.

### Kimberly

Kimberly grew up attending camp almost every summer because she soon realized that her week at camp was the best week of her whole summer. It was a time of being with friends, having fun, and feeling very close to God. Since her mom had a good experience working at camp as a teenager, Kimberly decided to work in the kitchen her first year. A couple years later, she was asked to serve as the Assistant Program Director. Both summers at camp were spent reinventing herself without any preconceived notions from anyone who had known her from her childhood. For Kimberly, these two summers at camp led her through a perspective transformation from which she was able to trace many of her future decisions. Kimberly found her voice and discovered her identity as a leader.

### Gina

Gina loved her childhood experiences of attending camp. Therefore, as a camp volunteer, she wanted to impact other campers in the same way. After her first year of working at Camp Menno Haven, she came back for two more summers. The first two summers, she worked as the lifeguard. Then, the third summer, she served as a counselor. Gina loved the camp experience, the people she met, and the positive influence she felt she had on the campers. She was empowered by working with people of faith who were

incredibly positive examples. Her role models at camp inspired her to make positive choices as an adult.

### Daniel

For several years, Daniel attended camp as a young boy. He was a counselor during his first summer and tried to discern exactly what his gifts were and how they could be used. He found camp to be a place to understand his inner stirrings and to find external confirmation. In regard to considering ministry, external confirmations came to Daniel in the form of the responsiveness of campers. They liked the way he was teaching them about the Bible, talking to them about faith, and helping them to gain a sense of empowerment to wrestle with their own questions. Daniel's second summer as an assistant to the Program Director helped him build on his leadership gifts. His two summers at camp led to full-time employment at multiple camps, a decision to attend seminary, and finally, a leadership position in a church as a pastor.

### Billy

Billy had a lot of fun attending summer camp throughout his childhood. When approached by the Program Director during a camp recruitment day at college, he decided to take the opportunity to return to camp to have fun, to minister to others, and to lead activities that he enjoyed. After two summers as a camp counselor, Billy decided to major in Camp and Recreation at college. He later spent a number of years in camp leadership as program staff and serving as a member of various camp boards. After his camping career, he found ways to use the skills he developed to hold a leadership role in



an insurance company. Now, he often finds himself thinking and reminiscing about times at camp and how those experiences impacted his life.

#### Jennifer

Jennifer had a good camping experience as a child and always wanted to work at a camp as an adult. Serving 2 years on summer staff, Jennifer found that camp responsibilities pushed her outside of her comfort zone and helped her learn more about herself as a leader. She found that she could enjoy working with smaller groups of people. Jennifer's camp experience helped her develop her leadership identity which she continued to develop and use at church in her Sunday School class and as an occupational therapist.

#### Nadia

Nadia knew that after she graduated from high school she could either spend the summer training to be a competitive college athlete or she could work as a counselor. In deciding to work at camp, she found more balance in her life between friends, exercise, and God. Nadia spent four summers at camp mostly working in leadership positions in the program department. Through her experience, Nadia grew as a leader and strengthened her Christian values.

#### Rachel

Rachel had many experiences as a camper that contributed to her interest in working at camp. She felt a sense of belonging that was not experienced in other areas of her life. As a counselor, she helped to provide other people with the same positive experience that she had as a camper. She learned about treating others with kindness and

respect. Rachel valued the servant leadership that was modeled by her fellow staff members.

### **Camp as a Collaborative Environment**

Before the camp participants arrive for the summer, the following aspects of the camp culture are present and remain in place throughout the summer program: Christ-centered with Anabaptist distinctives, leadership approach, and individual readiness. Christ-centered with Anabaptist distinctives describes how the staff follow Jesus' example. Leadership approach refers to how the participants are led to do their work with humility, authenticity, and empowerment. Individual readiness explains what leads them to serve on summer staff. The participants describe these three elements as permeating their camp experience.

#### **Christ-Centered With Anabaptist Distinctives**

When Jesus is the focus of a camp experience, the potential of that experience changes—it doubles or triples. — Rachel

The camp culture was described as being Christ-centered with Anabaptist distinctives. As a result, the faith practices of group discernment, serving others, and relationship building were infused in the daily routines. Before the camp participants arrived, the context for their experience was already set by these elements. By using the process of group discernment, followers of Jesus Christ were encouraged to interpret and teach from Scripture in community under the direction of the Holy Spirit. New understandings were developed through group discussions as this participant explains:

One of the hallmark notions of being Anabaptist is that we are followers of Jesus Christ. We are able to interpret and teach from Scripture in community, aided by the Holy Spirit. This was very present in the way we operated camp. We did Bible

studies with our cabin groups. It wasn't a hierarchical teaching model. We didn't have one person all summer telling us what we needed to say. We were empowered to read the Bible and talk about it with each other and trust that our best understanding would come out as we worked on it together. There was a strong sense of mutuality.

Group discernment created individual ownership within the community. Understanding each other's view encouraged the staff to make group decisions on an issue such as rearranging the schedule, camper discipline, or worship planning.

In addition to group discernment, an altruistic approach to working together was reflected by the Mennonite teachings to follow Jesus Christ's example of serving others. Following the Mennonite tradition, the participants claimed, "We believe that Jesus preached peace and that we are to love our enemies and not seek to harm them." Staff members were encouraged to serve others by seeking out the people who are being neglected and incorporating them into the group.

Finally, relationship building was an important aspect of summer camp. One participant commented, "We were unified around a very intentional mission where we were supporting someone other than ourselves." Staff members were encouraged to view others as brothers and sisters in Christ. This perspective of relationship building was highlighted by one participant as a way "to treat people as worthy and deserving of love. Jesus sought out the people who were excluded or didn't quite fit in with the majority of society. That was applied to summer camp." Another participant commented on modeling examples of Jesus in everyday life: "It makes a huge difference in how the camp trains its staff and how the staff interacts with the campers." Another participant stated, "It was cemented in the camp culture to give a significant attempt to reconcile relationships." In a similar manner, the camp directors used Jesus as a model when training the summer staff by trying to "follow Jesus in word and by living out their

beliefs.” Furthermore, maintaining healthy relationships through peace theology was a core commitment of Anabaptists. This commitment was described by a belief that “Jesus preached peace and all people are to love their enemies, not seek to harm them, and to care for those around them. This understanding of peace theology was emphasized in staff interactions.” The camp culture was strengthened by group discernment, serving others, and relationship building.

### Leadership Approach

Servant leadership doesn’t assume one has all the capabilities or knowledge to make all decisions independently of other people who are affected by the decisions.

– Rachel

An additional aspect of the camp culture was the leadership approach which involved making sure that events ran smoothly and that the campers were safely guided from event to event. In an effort to build cohesion among staff, leadership roles were not always assigned. This allowed for a person to “evolve naturally into a leadership role and build a rapport with others.” Another participant reflected, “Someone emerges as a leader because a group of people are allowing them to lead by being willing to follow, providing trust, and supporting them in that effort.” The busyness of camp caused the various activities to run concurrently. Leadership of these activities was naturally initiated by sharing the responsibility and “telling people it is their turn to step up.” Because of this, counselors were empowered as leaders through the shared responsibility of leading activities. One participant described that in the camp setting: “True leadership involves opening up and being yourself for others to see and connect with you.” The experienced staff “lived lives full of faith” and “led by example” which encouraged others to “want to contribute just as much.” The new staff followed the lead of the experienced staff by

“doing everything they could do to make camp a better environment.” Through this leadership approach, the participants learned to work with authenticity and empowerment.

### Individual Readiness

I thought camp would be a good laboratory to put some of my skills to work, to hone and learn, and to interact with peers that held similar values, interests, and faith.

– Daniel

Individual readiness of staff members was an important part of the camp culture. It referred to the transition between what happened before their experience of working at camp and what led them to serve on summer staff. In their reflections, some of the participants expressed a desire to recreate the experience they have for other children. They indicated a desire “to provide other people with positive experiences that they had as a camper.” Consequently, they were motivated and ready to serve on summer staff in order “to impact campers the way they had been impacted.” They recognized that there was “so much nostalgia in that location,” and that drew them to reflect on “who they were as a kid when they were more innocent.”

Furthermore, staff were self-motivated to serve additional summers through a desire to build on their prior experiences. There was an “an instant recall of the joy and the camaraderie, the growth through challenge that they faced [together].” Even though the staff were given “a modest stipend for the summer,” their specific interest for working at camp was much more “an internal reward.” In addition to giving up financial benefits, staff made academic or athletic sacrifices in order to experience a more balanced lifestyle at camp. For example, one participant indicated, “There’s more to life than just athletics.” The staff was often ready to see life beyond the common motivators of money

or advancement, to notice instead different, internal gifts. One participant indicated that her thoughts about God were developed. She said, “Working on summer staff was a way to examine myself and it helped me to formulate my own thoughts and theologies around God and who God is and what God means.” These examples of individual readiness were embedded in the camp culture.

### **Reflections on Camp Experience**

The actual stories of the participants serving at camp involve the work environment, team elements, and learning. Within these three topics are several subdivisions. The work environment includes the camp setting and practice leading. The team elements include team-building activities, unifying challenges, team qualities, and group dynamics. Learning includes peers and mentors, articulated beliefs, and intrapersonal reflection.

#### **Work Environment**

Within the Work Environment, the two parts—Camp Setting and Practice Leading—help reflect the story of serving at camp.

#### **Camp Setting**

Your entire life for that period of time is around summer camp and the campers.  
– Brian

Camp setting was an important factor within the work environment for the participants because of its location, its common focus, and its natural challenges. As a rural camp, its location removed the staff from interactions with people not at camp. One participant described the setting: “Camp was isolated and just a totally different

experience from that in the general culture.” The camp was 30 to 40 minutes from any business or store. Furthermore, access to phones and internet was limited. These realities of location and camp setting forced the staff to focus their attention on the relationships with the people they were with at camp rather than communicating with people not involved in their immediate situation. Working at summer camp day and night for 2 months created an illusion that the camp experience lasted much longer than it actually did. One participant commented, “Even though it was a month and a half long or two months, it felt like a year because of the intensity of the time that we were together.” In reflecting on the counselor role, one participant commented, “We were with the kids pretty much from when they came until they left for the week”; continuous programming was required to keep the children engaged. These long hours did not allow for clocking out and going home at the end of the day. In addition to camp location, the entire staff was immersed in a common focus of time, energy, and thoughts. The work environment of camp brought a participant’s whole life before the group. One participant describes how she begins to see who she really is:

[Camp] involves something that's 24 hours a day; you're going to see yourself in all types of scenarios—at your best times and at your worst times—that brings out your strengths. It also brings out your weaknesses. You're able to examine and say, ‘Where are my shortcomings? Where are my strengths?’

Along with camp location and common focus, several natural challenges were associated with the camp setting. One participant evaluated the impact that the busyness had on leadership:

I don’t recall camp leadership as being more proactive than reactive during the summer season. Some of that has to do with the environment of summer camp, with the number of tasks that need to be accomplished, and with the limited number of staff at a nonprofit camp. It didn’t often seem like there was space or breathing room to exercise proactive leadership.

At times, the busyness of camp dictated how the staff responded to challenges. Also, the need for staff to lead several activities concurrently required them to be more widely distributed. This conflict of time and space caused the staff, at times, to lead in isolation, and “sometimes counselors with a good deal of initiative would just do things and then apologize later if necessary.” The participants indicated that the camp setting along with its location, common focus, and natural challenges contributed to the intensity of the work environment.

### **Practice Leading**

If you never have the opportunity to try out different leadership styles, those skills will never grow or strengthen. – Ben

The camp had a history of nurturing people to develop as leaders. One participant stated, “Something that was inherent about the summer camping experience was that people were put into a role of leadership.” The work environment of camp was a setting for staff to consider future jobs, such as going into ministry, serving as a missionary, becoming a teacher, or working in not-for-profit organizations. For example, a participant reflected, “I see what camp does for people, as far as developing leaders, as staff are preparing for their future jobs.” Because of the history of providing support to people, there was a spirit of love and community that created a feeling of being “one big family.” Another participant reflected, “Because they were working so many hours, they were around each other so much that there was a lot more time and opportunities to practice being a leader.”

The staff had opportunities to practice being a leader by having responsibility of activities, groups of campers, and music. Leading activities meant that every hour of the



day, a different event required a staff member to supervise and facilitate “the activities, the games, morning worship, and campfires in the evenings.” Each of these interactions involved a different size of group ranging from two to 100, giving staff “an opportunity to guide the instruction or guide the conversation.” There was an effort to rotate responsibilities for each of these leadership roles throughout the day to give everyone an opportunity to practice leading in each setting. With multiple staff, one participant commented, “We worked together and needed to decide who was leading what.” Each year, the new staff went through an adjustment period as reflected by one participant: “The first summer, there was a lot of adjustment for me in figuring out exactly how our roles fit together and how decision making happened.” This participant went on to say, “At times, it seemed like the busyness lent itself to functioning together as a team only when necessary. [Additionally, the staff were expected to] problem solve on their own when it involved things that did not require group discernment.” Along with leading activities, staff practiced leading by having responsibility of groups of campers. This process was either self-selected or decided by the group. At times, the staff practiced leading by being told, “You're gonna lead tonight. You're in charge of the drama, or you're in charge of making sure that all 60 kids get back to their cabins.” This participant went on to qualify this comment: “It wasn't like any of us came with a lot of training on how to lead a bunch of children around. So we did it.” Another participant stated, “Everyone jumped in and did the best they could because the parents and campers relied on the staff to carry out every responsibility.” Those experiences of practicing leadership by having responsibility of activities helped strengthen their skills. This development was articulated as one participant said, “The first summer, I had leadership traits that were

nurtured in different ways. Then, in the second summer, [the traits] began to come out, but they were still growing.” Another way that counselors led campers was stated by this participant. He said that they helped by “leading activities, leading Bible studies, helping them change [their clothes], being a supervisor, and leading them from one place to the next.” He went on to say that the staff were responsible for their campers’ “personal hygiene, traveling from place to place as the schedule dictated, and nurturing their campers’ spiritual lives.” In addition, he indicated that they were responsible for helping campers “navigate the social challenges of being homesick or having conflicts with other campers.” The assistant program director practiced leading by “creating schedules, helping to coordinate activities, providing oversight for cabin counselors, and assisting with worship times and campfires.” Participants found that during the Bible study, the focus for counselors was on guiding the group discussion to intentionally help the campers to “open up and talk about their relationship with God.” For a majority of staff, leading others in prayer at camp was new. However, a participant claimed, “I saw people praying and I saw people doing devotions, so then I realized that I wanted to start doing that.” To help the new staff, experienced staff shared examples of how to pray, which allowed many to overcome their fear of praying out loud for the first time. One participant admitted, “I prayed in a conscious way, directly to God, for the first time [at camp].” The counselors practiced these leadership abilities daily throughout the summer.

Responsibility for music during worship was another major way for the staff to practice leading. Singing was integrated throughout the camping program. The staff could practice leading a variety of songs with the campers. Sometimes “goofy songs”

were led with motions and were very active, which allowed a “feeling that it was okay to express emotion.” A participant shared about her experience of practicing her leadership:

We were calling on [staff] for anything from building a fire to playing the piano, which I don't do, to leading silly songs, which I can do. People see where your strengths are and call upon your strengths. [Consequently,] it seems like they're not quite so harsh on your weaknesses.

In addition to leading songs vocally, the leaders needed to ask musicians to accompany them, provide the texts of the songs to the campers, and set up the space for the worship session. One participant commented that some staff simply “took an instrument to campfire and helped out” while others were “more substantially in charge of music.” Having more responsibility meant “being in charge of picking songs for campfire and making the PowerPoint for morning worship.” Most of the staff also became involved in the dramas or skits at some point during the summer. The participants indicated a joint effort as they “planned campfires and led worship in the mornings, [in which] everyone participated and everyone worked together.” Within the work environment of camp, all staff were actively involved with leading in a variety of ways.

In summary, the example that counselors reflected to the kids created a deep level of respect from the campers. A participant reflected:

The campers are looking at you [and] thinking, ‘You are the example for me. So how do I grow up to be a Christian?’ In a lot of ways, you're put on a pedestal and you probably don't deserve to be there. But you also do have something really special to share with them about who they can become, how they can really hold dear the faith and the values that they're learning about, and how they carry themselves around other people.

Throughout the camp experience, the staff experienced a variety of ways to lead and grow in their own confidence.

## Team Elements

The team elements of team-building activities, unifying challenges, team qualities, and group dynamics describe the group experience of serving at camp.

### **Team-Building Activities**

The very first week when all the staff arrived and there were no campers, we did a lot of teambuilding on the ropes course. Although some people were terrified of heights, everybody would rally around them and encourage them even though we were virtually strangers. – Kimberly

The team-building activities began during the planning week before the first campers arrived. One participant explained, “During an orientation period, there were team-building activities [which was] a time to understand each other. That was the foundation [and] . . . a very critical period for the staff.” One participant summarized that week as starting with “cooperative-type games where each [staff member had] a different goal but basically built trust among the group, built rapport with the group, learned how to communicate, and learned to problem solve as a group.” Another participant remembered gaining confidence during a challenging team-building activity by saying that other staff were “standing at the bottom of this tree or pole telling me that I could do it. And if a stranger [thought] that I could do it, maybe I could.” Another participant commented that as the staff worked to “develop programming, they required trust, and every step that was taken continued to build trust.” Another participant recalled:

During the planning week before the campers got there, it was very important to learn to work together immediately and to figure out the group dynamics. We had to plan campfires, figure out the Bible studies that went along with the theme, as well as do a lot of group bonding. So I think that for me [that week] was critical and it was interesting because we were thrown into it immediately.

This was explained further by another participant who indicated that “going through different teamwork activities, cooperatives, and initiatives definitely increased awareness of different ways of working with people [as well as] the importance of working with people. Talking about communication, trust, and listening affects [people] in the work place.” The time set aside to discuss how the group would interact became a very critical period for the staff. One participant said, “The [program director] did a great job of being intentional about working on building the team and getting people comfortable with each other.” As the summer progressed, this unity became evident through the support from other staff. The structured team-building activities and unstructured group bonding time were core pieces of the team elements.

### **Unifying Challenge**

At one point during orientation week, we literally locked ourselves in a big room and brainstormed and tried to hash out what was going to happen. – Kenneth

The team element of unifying challenge referred to the task of creating unity in the staff. The orientation week before the campers arrived was spent figuring out the immediate demands of “creating the lesson plans, learning the new activities and songs, and responding to concerns related to camper behavior.” It instantly became clear that there were many challenges facing this brand-new team of summer staff. Even though the staff were “thrown together immediately” upon arrival, it was “critical to bond quickly.” As a result of hours of team-building activities, such as the ropes course, the new staff began to establish a foundation for unity: “[We had] growth through the challenges that we all faced.” They began to rely on each other and became a more cohesive group. This unity, which was built on physical team-building activities, also led to a sense of

emotional and spiritual support as well. This growth in the group “stemmed from a genuine care for one another which was developed from the beginning by program leadership [staff].” Many of the tasks throughout the summer continued to be understood as group work and a question of “what can *we* accomplish.” The entire staff worked together because there were usually several roles to fill as they collectively wrestled with the question of how to have a meaningful impact on the campers. There was a mentality of dreaming about what could be accomplished with any given challenge. The initial shock of an overwhelming demand would be put into perspective by the suggestions and comments of all the staff members. The team element of unifying challenge became a part of their working relationship.

Counselors were charged with the task of caring for the campers throughout the week and all the stress associated with that responsibility. One participant describes the benefits of being in a close environment with people the same age:

The campers bring up all sorts of questions and then you talk to your staff friends and maybe say, ‘In Bible study, this kid said this.’ So you get into conversations amongst your peers. Most of them are Mennonites, so you have a similar background. But then every church is different, [so] you get a lot of different opinions and a lot of different ideas. Still, it feels like a safe place to talk about those things.

The team members could count on each other for support because they were all experiencing the same challenges. Another participant reflected, “We just sort of expected that we would rely on each other and it lent a great deal of cohesion to our group.” The expectation to rely on each other was articulated by a participant who reflected, “I always knew I had people I could reach out to if I needed help leading a Bible study, knowing how to deal with camper conflict, or concerns with scheduling.” The regular schedule was usually easy to take care of independently but if someone was

injured or a camper misbehaved, then it was important that people came together. During these various changes in the routine, the counselors cooperated, tried to be flexible, and stepped up as a team to make the rest of the day run smoothly. A participant shared a situation where he and another staff member were required to suddenly run after a camper and respond to his concerns: “The rest of the staff saw us with this camper and were able to cover and make sure that no one else was in danger. Showing their cohesion allowed for a powerful summer experience for campers and staff.”

The staff were willing to help out because they were becoming friends and also they shared ownership of the responsibilities of camp life. Thus, a cohesive team atmosphere evolved with camp staff throughout the summer through “a sense of being dependent on each other.” At certain points, the camp was short staffed and a sense of camaraderie emerged as the staff found ways to share the burden together. During the camps with a high number of participants, “we were short staffed and it felt like we needed to come together to cover for each other.” The fondness of working with fellow staff stemmed from these unifying challenges. The summer camp experience brought out the “really neat qualities in people” and “life-long friendships” developed. One participant commented: “The relationships grew from the beginning of the summer, when the group hardly knew one another, to the end of the summer when the group understood each other on a much deeper level.” The staff saw each other at their best times of having fun, but also, at their worst times of struggling through challenges. Because of these vulnerable experiences, camp was “a good place to foster relationships.”

As their relationships grew during the summer months at camp, the staff “took opportunities to connect with each other during the intervening months between summer

camp, either at college or at mid-winter staff reunions.” Clearly, “the depth of relationship and unity among staff had a big impact on the camping experience for the campers.” Sharing a common burden created a unified staff.

### **Team Qualities**

The best times were when we were able to talk about the spiritual growth we were seeing in campers, the good experiences we were having with them, how we saw God at work, the particular ways that a worship service moved our group, or special conversations we were having. – Daniel

The team element of team qualities encouraged a sense of trust and safety for the staff. One participant said, “Everybody viewed their fellow staff members as brothers and sisters in Christ and that opened up more opportunity for support.” This bonding was felt as they emerged as leaders. Building on the teachings of Jesus, the counselors tried to reflect positively on others. Because of these teachings and the effort to develop as a team, community was formed. Another participant stated, “People were supported in their roles and if they emerged as a leader, they received care from the community.” They were aware of each other’s struggles. One participant noted: “Someone who was too shy to be a leader had the opportunity to step forward, because [they knew that] people were going to give them the support that they needed.” Another participant remembered that he “always felt encouraged to try to push himself out of his comfort zone.” Others gave the support they needed to step into new roles. Within the first couple of days, there was a “feeling of being surrounded by great people who chose to serve at camp in order to serve others, to teach about Jesus, and to have fun.”

The team qualities of trust, safety, and support enhanced the development of the camp community. The participants reflected that it was “a safe place to talk” and that



others would “give support in every role.” Within a short time, “it felt like a big family” that grew out of “love and support.” This sense of connection was reflected in this participant’s response:

I remember the sense of being able to tell people how I was doing and also that people were able to share with each other how they were doing. And a lot of that goes back to that first week of really getting to know each other and being in situations where we had to trust each other.

They were more willing to be honest rather than defensive or emotionally guarded. That openness resulted in getting to know each other and becoming comfortable in situations where they had to trust each other. One highlighted: “Camp people are very trusting.” Additionally, trust was developed when the staff had to figure out how to teach the lessons, especially to little kids, and how to develop programming for each age group. Developing these components of the program “required trust, and every step of trust that was taken built on that trust.”

In addition to the team quality of trust, creating a feeling that camp was a safe place to talk continually introduced the team quality of support. “Counseling was emotionally and mentally exhausting,” one said. Although the work was “a little daunting, the daily counselor meeting allowed for a little reprieve by being a support group for one another. It served as an important meeting to process experiences and offer encouragement to each other.” Once again, the participants appreciated the team qualities of community and encouragement.

### **Group Dynamics**

Something unique about the camping environment, more than other environments that I’ve worked in, is that the camper’s experience is tied to the sense of relationship and psychological well-being of the program staff. — Rachel

The team element of group dynamics had a huge influence on how well the camp staff performed during the summer. When the staff experienced humility and flexibility, they felt like servant leaders striving to follow Jesus. To articulate this point, one participant reflected:

It takes a general attitude of humility . . . that through listening to others and I can involve those affected by the decision. I think that stems from people wanting to model servant leadership or follow the way of Jesus.

This humble approach to welcoming the involvement of others showed that “flexibility was a key aspect of leadership” in those situations. With the group focused on trying to follow the example of Jesus, the flexibility allowed for greater wisdom to evolve through group discernment.

Positive group dynamics encouraged connection on a “spiritual level,” which also offered additional support and encouragement to lead. One participant stated, “There were situations that were unexpected [where] people were willing to work together and figure out how to come up with a solution.” Discerning the will of God for an individual or for a group experience enhanced the group’s potential to grow and work together. During this time, the group shifted the focus from individuals within the group to relying on the group while being empowered by the Spirit. One participant recalled his experience by reflecting that “we just expected that we would rely on each other and it lent a great deal of cohesion to our group.” At times, that transition involved empowering someone in the group to take a risk of leading for the first time or in a new way. For example, a participant told of a “spirit of love or community [because] she felt the staff was part of her family” who would “support her to do as much as she could.” This

support was also illustrated through another story about a new staff member who felt overwhelmed by feelings of insecurity:

The very first week of camp, one of my fellow counselors was incredibly nervous. She had never done something like [camp] before and I remember seeing that [uneasiness] in her and went to talk to her about it. I told her, “You are so good with kids and I really believe that you can do this.” We sat there and prayed about it. I felt she was more at ease. Then, we talked about how we would be praying for each other.

These group dynamics emerged out of love, were empowered by the Spirit, and resulted in growth surrounded by support.

Many of the group dynamics that defined the experience of the campers and the interactions among staff were built on having an affinity based on age, being in college, and needing to make decisions about the future. The participants indicated a sense of camaraderie based on being with “this specific group of people for eight weeks and having stressors, excitement, and fun together.” Prior to camp, there was probably little opportunity to work with children on a large scale as one participant indicated: “None of us came with a lot of training on how to lead a bunch of children around.” Many people served at camp after living with parents and before complete adult independence.

Another reflected, “I was still practicing being out on my own to some degree and just being a couple of years into my undergraduate studies. I was still definitely maturing and perhaps I was a proto adult.” This dependency resulted in the support needed to navigate and understand those early stages of commitment. One participant recalled a story about developing lesson plans and schedules for a week that led to making decisions about her future:

I am appreciative that the staff had some insight to see where I could serve and build some skills. Because they believed in me, I feel I developed more, and it had a longer lasting affect than one week at camp. It helped me be where I am today.

Other decisions about life and the future were questioned and discerned among peers who may have been in similar situations. One participant highlighted the impact of the group on her decision to become a teacher through “one-on-one conversations clarifying her perspective of what she liked about working with kids or why that was close to her heart.” All of these conversations developed a foundation for deep interactions within the group.

There was also continuity of the same group members throughout the summer experience. Friendships were quickly developed as a result of being with the same people for meals, meetings, free time, worship, and even as roommates. A participant reflected on the development of friendships: “I developed friendships and spent a lot of time together as I ate with, bunked with, and got to know people well. I developed strong bonds quickly.” After being with the same people for an extended period of time, space was created for the staff to be dedicated to working together. One participant highlighted the importance of having a “common purpose that drove [everyone] together.” Another participant reflected that the staff operated out of “a very focused and intense set of relationships.”

The staff held each other accountable to their own personal values and the commitments of the camp programming. In response to actions by another staff member, one participant remembered “giving each other flack” and asking “what they were thinking” when personal judgment was in question. Staff meetings were an example of when the group processed its effectiveness of being intentional as there was an effort to reflect on how the staff experienced the previous day. One participant reflected, “Primary support was present in the peer staff meetings [as a way] to be able to have some

camaraderie around the intense experience we were all having.” Another recalled, “Staff meetings often had their scheduling and figuring out the plan of the day, but more than that, it was building relationships and just having fun together.” Finally, working with the same group of people resulted in developing patterns or routines that allowed for more efficient work.

As the staff got to know each other better, they knew who to rely on for leading games, music, worship, or discussions. The group approached their relationships with their co-workers with a spirit of love. The staff arrived at camp with “basically good intentions” or “the right reasons” and then became aware of each other’s unique strengths. There was also time to console each other during difficult times or life in general. The “spirit of love” grew through times of struggle as well as times of fun. “That sense of camaraderie and community was there very clearly at the peer level among summer staff.” Relationships were strengthened by allowing a sense of camaraderie, community, and even family.

### Learning

The third part of the participants’ reflections on their camp experience is Learning. Peers and Mentors, Articulated Beliefs, and Intrapersonal Awareness are included in this section. The section on Peers and Mentors describes the learning that takes place through leading among peers while being nurtured by mentors. The Articulated Beliefs section describes the learning that takes place through articulating a belief system, reflecting in small groups, and developing a practice of prayer. The Intrapersonal Awareness section refers to the learning that happens from increased insight and intuition about self and others.

## Peers and Mentors

As somebody that was growing in my faith, I had the opportunity to learn from others that were on the same journey. – Billy

Peers and mentors helped the staff build confidence in their leadership skills and learn to interact with kindness and understanding. The leaders worked hard to nurture the faith in others by providing positive examples of living their own faith through their daily devotions, willingness to help others, or positive attitude. They were seen as “incredibly positive examples of living their faith.” One participant reflected her experience of being in this close environment: “There were people around your own age all the time. You would get into conversations amongst your peers with a lot of different opinions and a lot of different ideas.” Another indicated, “Some people exemplified incremental spiritual learning and just kept adding to it.” These discussions among peers often led to spiritual transformations as prayer support was offered in response to the struggles that were discussed.

The staff modeled kindness and respect by treating everyone at camp equally. Immersed in the faith culture of camp, the experienced staff modeled “beautiful routines of faith and life in relationships.” The leaders listened and made time to discuss the questions of the new staff. One participant commented, “The faith that the staff bring to camp and how they are intentional about nurturing themselves and each other is unique.” This mentoring approach brought about deeper reflection. One participant shared about modeling faith: “It was modeled from the leadership [through] a genuine interest in a relationship [by making] time for conversation or for listening.” Another participant reflected on her experience of being mentored: “I learned a lot about how to lead small groups by experiencing and watching other people lead them as well as being more

comfortable praying extemporaneously.” Through the kindness and respect that was modeled, the new staff chose to follow their example as they gave leadership to activities and discussions. They were often paired with experienced staff in order to follow an example that helped show the way. One participant reflected, “The older staff would split up so that as a younger person, I could look up to them in leading a talk.”

Respected mentors gave healthy feedback and support when someone emotionally struggled with any particular situation. One participant reflected on the impact of the mentoring relationships from “caring for another staff member that was upset about something and crying or lonely, to some very healthy feedback.” The level of compassion shared among peers would have been different “without Jesus in the mix or without the faith of the staff.” Caring for each other as they learned and developed created lifelong friendships. Peers and mentors enhanced the camp experience for the staff by encouraging leadership skills and modeling the way of Jesus every day.

### **Articulated Beliefs**

I practiced putting my own belief system into words. – Jennifer

The Articulated Beliefs section explains the staff’s opportunity during the camp experience to share their beliefs and how that process in turn triggered self-reflection and a deeper understanding of themselves and their faith. One opportunity for the staff to share their beliefs was during campfires. A typical campfire was explained:

It started out with some singing around the campfire, outside. So, you’re immersed in nature and there’s worship happening. There is a time when one of the staff stands up and gives some spiritual input. And that can be anything from a testimony, to some reflections on a specific Bible verse, to reading a story and then reflecting on how that relates to God’s purpose in our lives.

One participant explained, “We would rotate responsibility for those between staff. And oftentimes people would pair up together to put something together.” Another participant remembered planning campfire with “at least a couple of people working together if not more.” One participant shared:

A lot of staff had a chance to really delve deeper into what they believed and present it to the group of campers. Campfires were a really powerful time of growth for the staff in terms of being able to articulate what it was they believed in front of a group of people.

Each day of the week had a topic based on the Scripture during the times of worship. The staff shared examples from their own life as a testimony of how they practiced their faith in response to the daily topic. One participant shared:

You learn to speak publicly in a way when you’re not all that knowledgeable [about theology]. I mean, I was not by any stretch of the imagination, a very theological person, but I was forced to cater to the age group that I was working with and tried to generate a message that was useful to them.

The staff talked with each other to process their thoughts and reflect on relevant examples in their faith journey.

In addition to campfires, the times set aside for prayer and reflection among staff were opportunities for theological learning. A participant shared, “At the beginning of each week, we had a staff worship time where we sang songs and someone provided input on a topic of their choice. Then we split up into groups for prayer and deeper reflection.” Reflection allowed for more awareness of the personal growth and learning that was taking place such as an increased comfort level in leading campers in discussions or activities. Discussing those new insights in small groups invited the staff to own their new thoughts and have them reflected back to them by their peers. The cycle of



needing to teach, developing a way to articulate an understanding, and reflecting on new understandings resulted in new theological learning.

### **Intrapersonal Awareness**

In regard to my considering ministry, it was a time where there were external confirmations for some of the internal stirrings. – Daniel

Serving at summer camp allowed the staff to gain insight and intuition about themselves and others. This development of intrapersonal awareness was a key element in the makeup of camp life. A participant commented, “Camp was a place where there was a lot of busyness but there was also a lot of time for reflection.” Participants claimed that camp was a place for “active reflection” and it “made them think more critically about how to interpret others.” One participant highlighted her experience: “You had the internal processing that you were doing with your faith and your identity, and then you also had this external stuff with collaborating with your peers and either volunteering or being asked to take on leadership.” The staff learned through testing their gifts and then reflecting with others. People could learn to communicate and share ideas with each other at camp. As the staff began to articulate their views and ideas, they gained confidence and respect. Problems were solved through building trust among the group, building rapport with the group, and ultimately learning how to communicate on a deeper level.

Although the summer program, like many work environments, was busy, there were times built into the daily schedule for reflection. One participant commented about staff meetings: “It was an opportunity to reflect on the prior day’s activities. It was a time when you could share what you were doing. We laughed a lot about different things that

happened and some things that were pretty meaningful for people.” Another participant commented on the time set aside for reflection:

Every Sunday before campers would come, we would have staff worship and a time for reflection and [time to] check in on how things were going. The whole structure was set up for reflection on who you were and how you were being impacted.

At the end of the summer, a time was set aside for group processing. As the staff debriefed their summer experience with each other, they reflected on ways that they had grown individually and collectively. One participant commented on the debriefing at the end of the summer: “There was a campfire time to be more quiet and reflective or sometimes summer staff led a campfire and talked about some verses of the Bible and [this gave] time and space to reflect on your experience.” Through active and quiet reflection and articulation, most of the participants realized that serving at camp had helped to develop their intrapersonal awareness.

## **Reflections in Current Roles as Leaders**

### **Leadership Development**

The Reflections in Current Roles as Leaders includes Leadership Development and Identity Development. Within Leadership Development are Leader Validation, Leadership Growth, Responsibility Growth, and Relationship Growth. Identity Development involves Self-awareness and Perspective Transformation. Leadership development was affirmed through the participants’ stories of leadership development and identity development.

### **Leader Validation**

It was an immersion in that faith culture with many people your age that have similar backgrounds. You are isolated and it’s just a totally different experience from my

experience in the general culture. It was affirmation that you just don't get anywhere if a community is not reflective of your background. – Kenneth

After the experience of serving on summer staff, the participants felt validated as leaders. They were affirmed by many positive experiences. First, they discovered that they had something valid to contribute. Next, they felt safe to try leading beyond their comfort zones. Last, they balanced their internal and external discernment of role commitment. Several participants used the words “validation” and “affirming” to describe their leadership development. One participant remembered:

The program director always wanted us to be involved and if we had something we wanted to speak to or felt led to speak about, we were encouraged to help plan and be part of a campfire. I think that encouraged me to search my heart a little bit more to determine if there was something that I wanted to talk about. I could be just as valuable as someone else who I thought was stronger in their faith, more devout, or more educated. However, everything that I was thinking was just as valuable.

Every member of the staff was considered eligible to lead activities or present a message to the campers. This basic assumption that everyone in the community was a contributing member created an expectation that regardless of experience, everyone would be involved in leadership. Since everyone had important and valid thoughts to share, it became routine for people to emerge and discover their leadership qualities.

Another participant said:

I think camp helped to push me outside of my comfort zone into learning to know who I am as a leader. I can be comfortable to sit on the sidelines and let other people be the upfront person. But I realized that when I was the upfront person, I could be in charge and that I was good at it. I didn't have to fear that I wasn't good and was going to fail.

Positive experiences such as effectively leading activities or discussions were continually being shared during staff meetings to reaffirm the feeling of safety within the camp community. The willingness to practice and test their leadership skills at camp

paralleled their risks on the ropes course on the first day of the summer. The program director used the lessons of inclusion and communication from the ropes course to set an example of how to offer support to those who took risks outside their comfort zones. In describing the uniqueness of camp, one participant said, “Every job has an orientation but not every job has an orientation that involves direct focus on the skills of communication and trust.” These lessons and practices of being aware of emotions and providing encouragement led to validation of the leadership development.

Some staff members arrived at camp with an internal stirring for more leadership. Others had never considered themselves leaders until they were faced with an opportunity to lead at camp. One participant responded, “I think I was a leader coming into it but also working at summer camp helped me strengthen that.” Another reflected, “I tested my leadership at camp. I was not comfortable leading prior to camp.” Regardless of where the internal journey of leadership started, the external support and discernment helped to validate the leadership qualities.

For instance, one participant felt that the support at camp helped her decide to become a teacher: “It provided a clarifying perspective of what it is I like about working with kids or why that is close to my heart.” Through this validation process of testing leadership and clarifying passions, the staff were able to continue discerning their future plans. Another participant articulated:

In regard to considering ministry, external confirmations came in the form of the responsiveness of campers to the way that I was teaching them about the Bible or talking to them about faith by helping to give them a sense of empowerment to really wrestle with these things and to then see them grasp onto that. I found that I was able, even under pressure, to helpfully direct people towards a positive end, whether it be afternoon recreation or some kind of interpersonal thing. It was a time where there was external confirmation for some of the internal stirrings that I had had in terms of particularly looking towards ministry.

This discernment ability was seen in the role they took within other groups outside of camp, in their decisions about college majors and career paths, and what jobs they would consider. One participant explained this validation: “Working at camp was integral to my decision to be a teacher. I wrote multiple papers in college with reflections on how camp was always a critical part of the conclusion to go into education.” Leader validation was an important part of the after-camp experience for the staff.

### **Leadership Growth**

I don’t think anybody can step up to be a leader unless someone is willing to say ‘I’ll follow you.’ A person that is going to accept that role as a leader is going to be someone that others feel very comfortable with, so, at camp, people are very trusting.  
– Billy

Another important aspect of leadership development was leadership growth. As the camp staff built confidence, leaders began to emerge in a natural way. One participant stated, “Leadership was not particularly assigned, but staff members grew into leadership positions.” At camp, much of the “leadership was determined by what the staff themselves brought and put into their work.” Another shared, “I would definitely say staff affirmation gave me more confidence in my leadership skills.” Through repetition of practicing new skills, leadership grew and led to a reflection on the new understandings of leadership. One participant shared, “I did a lot of personal processing about camp. When I see examples of unhelpful leadership, I try to turn it on its head and see how it might be changed to be helpful.”

The staff would often take on the responsibility to lead particular activities. One said, “Every counselor is a leader to the kids, but someone generally emerges as the teacher, leader, or instructor of an activity.” The feedback from the program director and

fellow staff after each activity allowed them to learn from their mistakes and build on their strengths. Leadership growth began as the staff developed a sense of security within the group. One participant shared, “I could be more confident being ‘who I am’ and could more easily be the leader.”

Through the many team-building activities and group-bonding exercises, the staff shared honestly with each other. Confirmation of gifts and skills created more confidence in leading. The general understanding at camp was that “everyone is developing as a leader all the time.” As gifts emerged naturally in response to the needs of camp life, others on staff called out the strengths and named them as an asset to the group. Leadership “tended to be organic.” With practice and repetition, it became more natural for the staff to lead. Additional responsibilities were given to them, creating more growth.

As the staff grew in their leaderships skills, they discovered a new awareness of their substantial influence over others. For many participants, that was the first time of personally experiencing the ability to influence groups of people. In response to providing leadership at the beginning of the summer, one participant admitted, “I had no idea what I was doing.” They reflected on how they saw each other developing as leaders during the staff worship, in the daily staff meetings, and in many informal conversations. Leadership growth was a common topic of discussion because many did not consider themselves leaders before coming to camp.

### **Responsibility Growth**

Parents and campers are looking to you to care for their child and so you naturally have to be a leader and decide what to do with this responsibility. Those experiences help strengthen your role as a leader. — Brian

In addition to leader validation and leadership growth, responsibility growth was an integral part of leadership development. Responsibility growth occurred through learning from trial and error of being the primary care-giver for a group of children. Seeing the impact of the responsibility of caring for a group of campers encouraged good judgment. The experience also led to a better understanding of the responsibilities associated with certain career paths such as being a teacher, pastor, or not-for-profit administrator. One participant reflected, “I don't know if I would have had the courage to go into teaching if I had not had those experiences.” At the beginning of each week, the counselors felt the magnitude of being accountable in their role:

I was in a cabin with 11 kids and I was all alone. You had to figure out quickly how to manage camper behavior, and get them to do what they need to do, and also care for them. [Fortunately,] you got a chance to start over every week, so you could try a lot of different things in a way that you couldn't in a classroom but once a semester.

Since none of the staff had children of their own, anything related to parenting was new territory. Another staff reflected:

When you were in charge of 8-10 kids, 24 hours a day, there was no way you couldn't grow and learn. That was an enormous responsibility that a lot of counselors didn't really recognize until that first night when they got back to their cabins and they were like, ‘Oh my gosh—I have to make sure all these kids go to sleep. And then in the morning I have to make sure they get their breakfast and I have to do it in a way that is consistent with my values.’

The staff quickly realized the importance of modeling positive behavior. This realization was shown in the learned task of gaining respect and positive responses from the campers. The lesson spoke volumes to the stress and workload that resulted from ineffective approaches. A participant reflected, “It was really powerful for me to be able to reflect on strategies of how to get people to do what they needed to do and to bring order out of chaos.” Developing good judgment in order to respond to critical situations

helped the staff grow in their integrity. For example, they learned to use non-anxious responses in emergencies so that they didn't further upset the already traumatized camper. One participant explained:

I think that the intensity of the camp experience and the necessity of maintaining a non-anxious presence in times of emergency, both remaining calm for the campers and remaining calm for one's peers was a good little nugget that I have held onto. I'm not unflappable, but in situations where there's intensity or an emergency, I'm far more capable of staying calm and being non-anxious and dealing with things in a helpful, orderly way than I was prior to camp.

Another participant reflected, "I realized that I never could have reacted in emergency situations." The constant interaction with children provided lessons and practice in future parenting. These experiences started as soon as the parents entrusted their children to the care of the summer staff for a whole week. As they continued through every discipline issue and schedule requirement, the staff got a glimpse of what skills parents need. One participant reflected:

The ability to be with one group of kids every minute of that week and forming that relationship and having fun with them and being able to learn through positive experiences, has helped me a lot in being a parent and being with my own children.

The reflections in current roles as leaders helped participants discern and embrace their many talents and gifts that had been encouraged at camp.

### **Relationship Growth**

People were willing to step in and help each other out just because they cared about them as friends. It wasn't like a quid pro quo, like in other work places, rather it was, 'I'll step in and help you 'cause I know you need it.' Why did we do it? Love, I guess.  
– Kimberly

Finally, leadership development was reflected in relationship growth. Serving others was an effort to act as Jesus. One participant said, "Even if you are in a position of leadership, you had to be willing to not rub it in people's faces, or use it as a tool of



power, but as servant leadership.” By “acting like Jesus to each other,” the staff created an “attitude of humility,” which was unassuming and did not demand respect from other staff. In turn, one participant commented, “The staff taught the campers by living out exactly what we preached. We were talking about serving others, we talked about being kind to others, and we were talking about giving.” The camp experience helped to bring out the best in everyone.

One participant reflected, “Working at camp those two summers really changed my life because I was around people who fully believed in me 100 percent.” Another stated, “The summer started with this baseline of a level playing field. Then people start to see your gifts, and they started to call upon you to use them.” The staff learned to search deeply inside themselves to discover their greater potential.

The support of the experienced staff helped bring out the best in the other staff members. All the counselors were held accountable to each other in an attempt to help them be their best. As they encountered greater intentionality of behaving around each other, they were motivated to receive counsel from their peers. One thought that “supporting someone other than oneself” was not practiced for personal gain but for the betterment of the community. For example, staff might ask each other what their intentions had been in certain conversations. One participant reflected, “We gave each other flack sometimes if we thought each other was doing something that was unusual, and it was mostly because we weren’t standing up for ourselves.” Ultimately, it was life-changing to be around people who believed in you fully.

## Identity Development

Through reflections in current roles as leaders, identity development was identified as an important outcome of the camp experience. Identity development was described through the participants' stories of how serving at camp impacted their self-awareness and led to a perspective transformation.

### Self-Awareness

We would split up into groups and have prayer and a time for deeper reflection in these support groups. This would be a time for a deeper understanding of self-actualization. — Kevin

Self-awareness growth was cultivated by several factors embedded in the camp experiences that led to a shift in self-perception and the beginning of self-actualization. Several factors contributed to this identity development of the staff. One factor was the shift in focus of attention resulting from the business of the work environment and the remote location of camp. One participant indicated, "Because you are working so many hours and it's such a unique experience, even though it's only a month and a half, it feels like a long time; you really learn a lot about yourself and how you function." Another factor was that the positive relationships of camp life allowed the staff to learn about themselves while furthering their faith journey. One participant reflected:

I would say that most people find working on summer staff as a very good time in terms of being able to further one's own spiritual walk and being able to learn not only about others, but also about you. I think this is a very common outcome of working on summer staff and a very positive one, as well.

Additionally, the newness of the relationships became a turning point for the staff to begin to believe in themselves without any preconceived notions from prior experiences. One participant expressed, "Camp was the turning point for my life. That

was when I became confident. I believed in myself. I firmly believed that people liked me.” Serving at summer camp became an opportunity to mature through exercising independence from prior relationships while taking on new responsibilities. A separation from prior experiences and relationships gave a fresh start to act and be different from what was assumed or expected in more familiar surroundings.

A shift in self-perception happened as one participant explained, “I was figuring myself out and trying to find who I was and who I wanted to be.” As their responsibilities grew, they “looked at things as adults.” Being young people themselves, the staff had a lesson in discovering their own vulnerabilities. Because of the many demands placed on the staff, one participant reflected, “I think it was maybe one of the first times that I realized there was a limit to what I could do both in terms of capability and energy.”

The continuous interactions with the same group of people revealed their true selves and forced the staff to adjust how they perceived themselves and others. Another participant made a comparison: “At a typical job, you can be someone at work and then go home and be someone else. You can have this total face of who you want to be at work. But camp is not like that. You see every side of every person and so this brings awareness.” These continuous interactions led to a greater revelation of people’s identities.

### **Perspective Transformation**

The camp context, maybe because it’s a Christian context, also because it’s a stage of life, leads to perspective transformation or challenging assumptions. – Rachel

Perspective transformation was derived from acknowledging assumptions about self and other staff and then challenging those assumptions to develop a new perspective.

One participant shared:

The first summer at camp I was pretty fond of wearing camouflage pants and I had my campers doing some boisterous marches from place to place. The program director had a conversation with me and he said, 'You know, this is really not the kind of thing we're hoping to encourage in the kids because this is a Mennonite camp. We have certain expectations about peace theology.' That was one experience that got me thinking, 'Wow! What am I taking for granted?'

The journey of growth at camp "led to transformation and was influenced by the Christian environment." The staff was surrounded by respectful mentors whom they admired. The nurturing environment led to very powerful conversations about spirituality. One participant shared:

You are starting to assert independence and understand your own voice, or not understand your own voice, but begin to listen to it. Experiencing positive models of Christian faith from people that you respect and admire is very powerful and you come away with the sense of, 'I want to be like that' or 'I could be like that.' I think the Christian camping environment, more than other camping environments, does a really good job of nurturing children in their own emerging spirituality and I think that is really powerful, and even conversional.

For another participant, camp changed his life: "It was a watershed moment that shifted into an understanding of Christian formation that became a lifelong process."

Camp helped to define beliefs and perspectives. A participant reflected: "You practiced putting your own belief system into words, and you thought, 'Oh, that's why I believe that.'" It also helped to articulate the staff's relationships with God. Another participant reflected:

Summer camp helped me define my beliefs, and it helped me come to a place of being able to articulate them. It helped me realize and understand how I perceive my relationship with God. Then, I took that out of the summer camp setting and applied it to the rest of my life.

The Christian environment of camp fostered deep reflection which was not a natural tendency for the campers or the staff. One participant compared her growth to her work with the campers by sharing:

It's not part of who we are as kids to think deeply, whereas in a Christian environment, that was part of what I experienced. Kids as young as 12 and 13 years are thinking deeply about themselves and we nurtured that and were supportive of that and explored that.

However, that participant went on to share: "Most of the stories that I heard from friends working at this camp and also from campers included words like transformation or conversion." The potential impact of their experiences at camp grew profoundly because "Jesus was the focus."

Because the staff was at "a stage of life that led to a perspective transformation or a challenging of assumptions," one participant articulated growth in this way: "We experienced Jesus on our own, apart from parents and families." These changes in perspectives were experiences at different levels as another participant explained, "I don't know that I would say that my perspectives have changed. I pretty much have the same ideas for life, but I definitely feel that camp helped me clarify them."

### **Summary**

The findings were presented through a collection of narratives from 11 interviews. The chapter was divided into four sections: Participants, Camp as a Collaborative Environment, Reflections on Camp Experience, and Reflections in Current Roles as Leaders. The first section, Participants, gave background to respondents' decision to serve as summer staff. The second section, Camp as a Collaborative Environment, told of the significance of Anabaptist theology in terms of defining the approach to training the

camp staff. The third section, Reflections on Camp Experience, reported the stories of the participants in terms of busyness, practice leading, learning, and theological growth. Supportive relationships grew out of the intensity of the camp setting. Trust was a defining quality of these relationships. Through an effort to follow the example of Jesus, service to others was a recurring theme among the participants. The final section, Reflections in Current Roles as Leaders, reported how the summer staff experience resulted in developing skills to lead groups, spiritual growth, and a greater understanding of self. Each of these elements was articulated by the participants in connection to leadership development.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### **Introduction**

Leaders today need a new set of knowledge and skills to be effective in collaborative environments. The focus of this study was to investigate how collaborative environments can contribute to the leadership development process. The purpose of this study was to describe how the collaborative environment of summer camp helped shape emerging adults as leaders. The summer camp setting is inherently collaborative and, therefore, can inform and develop leaders for future collaborative settings. The research question, How do adults who served at a summer camp as emerging adults describe the experiences that helped shape them as leaders? was the focus of this study.

#### **Research Design and Sampling**

The primary research design was a qualitative design (Creswell, 2012; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Merriam, 2009). A case study method was utilized (Berg, 2004; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009, 2011) in the Mennonite camp setting. The data in this setting were gathered through the participants' stories of their experiences using narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2010; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Creswell, 2012).

The criterion for this purposeful sampling directly reflects the purpose for this study and guided the identification of information-rich cases. The primary criteria were (a) the participants have served at a Mennonite camp for at least two summers, (b) the participants have served at a camp as an emerging adult, (c) the participants will be chosen with an effort to create a balance between gender and ethnicity, and (d) the number of participants will be between 10-20 or until there is saturation of the data.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework included Anabaptist theology, transformative learning theory, servant leadership theory, and collaboration. This study took place at a Mennonite Camp associated with Mennonite Church USA. Mennonite Church USA is rooted in the Anabaptist tradition. The conceptual assumptions of the camp and many participants reflected Anabaptist values that provide the overarching conceptual theological frame for this study. The second component of the conceptual framework was transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1978; E. Taylor & Cranton, 2012), nuanced by the ontological assumptions of Anabaptist theology. Transformative learning theory explained the type of learning that enables critical changes to occur as perspectives shift from an individual to a collective focus. The third component of the conceptual framework was servant leadership theory. For Anabaptists, the communal ethic was a defining characteristic as they strove to be servant leaders (Neufeldt, 2013). Servant leadership was essential to the altruistic approach of serving others to enable them to also develop as leaders (Bryman et al., 2011). The final component of the conceptual framework is collaboration.

The first component of the conceptual framework is Anabaptist theology. Anabaptists renewed the accounts of the early church in the New Testament of being



multi-voiced, participative, and expectant that the Holy Spirit would lead all members of the church community to discern and understand Scripture (Murray Williams & Murray Williams, 2012). Rather than relying only on the biblical scholars to have access to Scriptures and a relationship with God, all believers have access and a responsibility to study Scripture (Finger, 2004). Because of its communitarian commitments, Anabaptism fosters collaboration.

The second component of the conceptual framework, transformative learning theory, deals with learning and discovering a new way of thinking. At the foundation of transformative learning, according to Freire (1970), knowledge is attained through a process of inquiry and creation where a group of people exchange ideas, discuss problems from various perspectives, and construct meaning together. Critical reflection (Mezirow, 1990), as a collaborative process of transformative learning, may lead to perspective transformation (Mezirow, 1991) resulting in a new understanding of leadership. Day et al. (2012) claim that leadership development could be better understood with an integrative theoretical approach linking adult development, identity and self-regulation, and expertise acquisition.

The third component of the conceptual framework is servant leadership theory. Greenleaf (1991) explained that “the great leader is seen as servant first, and that simple fact is the key to his greatness” (Greenleaf, 1991, p. 21). Listening, praising, and encouraging are attributes modeled by servant leaders (Blanchard, 1995), fostering a nurturing environment. Servant leadership, according to Laub et al. (1999), is inclusive and promotes community among teams that leads to stronger collaborative relationships. In focusing on follower performance and growth, Northouse (2012) claimed that for

followers, the expected outcome is greater self-actualization. Greenleaf (1991) contributed to distinguishing between leader development versus leadership development and the dueling interest of personal gain versus the common cause with his test of who a servant leader is:

The true test of a servant-leader is this: do those around the servant-leader become wiser, freer, more autonomous, healthier, and better able themselves to become servants? And will the least privileged of society be benefited or at least not further deprived? (p. 7)

The final component of the conceptual framework is collaboration. Wood and Gray (1991) claim that collaboration occurs when a group of autonomous stakeholders of a problem engage in an interactive process, using shared rules, norms, and structures, to act or decide on issues related to that domain. This interactive process of engagement is also found in the Anabaptist ethic of community that leads to group discernment. Collaboration exists when there is an interactive process involving a change-oriented relationship with all stakeholders (Wood & Gray, 1991).

A recent study by Garber et al. (2009) indicated a positive correlation between collaboration and servant leadership among participants. Individual leader development and group leadership development were explored to better understand how the participants served each other as they developed as leaders (Carroll & Simpson, 2012; Day, 2001).

The following analogy of leadership development explains how the four parts of the conceptual framework work together. Leadership development is like a vehicle that can transport people on a journey. The length and quality of the journey is determined by its internal system. The highly refined fuel for the vehicle is Anabaptist theology. This fuel is derived from the life and teachings of Jesus. The engine of the vehicle is like

transformative learning. Within the engine, critical reflection ignites the fuel from Anabaptist convictions to create momentum. Then, servant leadership is applied as a lubricant to enable all parts to move more smoothly and function at their greatest potential. Once movement is initiated, a series of other systems is set into motion, creating new ways of working collaboratively.

### **Findings**

The findings provide insight into the research question: How do adults who served at summer camps as emerging adults describe the experiences that helped shape them as leaders?

This study focused on the stories of 11 people who served as emerging adults at a summer camp in the Midwest. Through the narratives of their lived experiences, each former summer staff member gave meaning and understanding of how their experience shaped them as leaders. The stories they told gave background to what led them to consider serving on summer staff at a Mennonite camp in the Midwest. Although they each had a unique journey preceding their service on summer staff, many of them highlighted similar motivations. The positive impact of attending summer camp as a child was a major factor in the decision. Also, a common response was to serve others in a way that was modeled to them at camp or other settings.

Each of the participants served two, three, or four summers at camp. The majority of the experiences came from serving in the role of camp counselor. Several of the participants evolved into a leadership role as assistants to the Program Director for at least one summer. Their term of service each summer was approximately 2 months. Each week, they were responsible for campers from Sunday through Friday. Since their time of

service at camp, each of the participants identified that they later served in various leadership roles. Among the participants, there was a wide range in the degree to which they had processed their experience. This range resulted in varying levels of reflection during the interviews. However, all of the participants reflected on how their summer staff experience shaped their quality of leadership today.

This study revealed three main findings: (a) as collaborative environments Mennonite camps provide an important context for leadership development; (b) participants in this study were able to identify how their experience on the camp staff contributed to their leadership development in significant ways; and (c) participants could identify ways that their experience on the staff of a Mennonite camp continues to influence their practice of leadership in current collaborative environments.

The research data in this study revealed that as collaborative environments Mennonite camps provide an important context for leadership development. The contribution to leadership development was evident in several ways. First, a proclivity toward servant leadership rises naturally out of the camp's embodiment of Christ-centered Anabaptist values. These values are well aligned with servant leadership theory because, for Anabaptists, the communal ethic is a defining characteristic as they strive to be servant leaders (Neufeldt, 2013). Next, the camp environment is inherently a context for transformative learning because of the focus on developing nurturing relationships that allow for deep self-reflection that enables critical changes to occur as perspectives shift. Next, the data indicated that “relational wisdom” was developed as an important aspect of leadership in the collaborative setting of camp.

Participants in this study were able to identify how their experience on the camp staff contributed to their leadership development in significant ways. First, the need to articulate beliefs at campfire, devotions, and Bible study challenged the participants to delve deeper into what they believe and then present it to the campers and staff. Second, the participants practiced leading during every hour of the day, requiring them to introduce and facilitate the group interactions while being mentored by more experienced staff. Through repetition of practicing new skills, leadership grew and led participants to reflect on their new understandings of leadership. Third, the structured team-building activities and unstructured group-bonding time developed the skill of communication. Through active and quiet reflection, participants indicated that serving at camp had taught them to communicate on a deeper level.

The research data in this study revealed that participants could identify ways that their experience on the staff of a Mennonite camp continues to influence their practice of leadership in current collaborative environments. The reflections in current roles as leaders helped participants discern and embrace their many talents and gifts that had been encouraged at camp. The most significant ways their early experiences contribute to their development as leaders in collaborative environment included: perspective transformation, identity development, and responsibility growth. Perspective transformation was derived from acknowledging assumptions about self and other staff and then challenging those assumptions to develop a new perspective. Serving at summer camp became an opportunity for the participants to mature through exercising independence from prior relationships while taking on new responsibilities. Identity development was evident through the positive relationships cultivated among camp staff,

which allowed the participants to develop their identity by learning about themselves while furthering their faith journey. Responsibility growth was revealed as an integral part of leadership development. Responsibility growth occurred through learning from trial and error of being the primary care-giver for a group of children. Developing good judgment in order to respond to critical situations helped the participants grow in their integrity. The experience also led to a better understanding of the responsibilities associated with certain career paths such as being a teacher, pastor, or not-for-profit administrator.

## **Discussion**

The experiences needed to contribute to leadership development in a collaborative environment are transformative when situated within Anabaptist theology. The Mennonite camp setting allows for a unique intersection of leadership practice, mentoring, and spiritual growth. Although church leaders and the broader church community have neglected to recognize the intrinsic value that camps bring to the church, hundreds of emerging adults are engaging in leadership development every summer. For more than 50 years, camps have been an experiential learning ground for raising leaders for many vocations. Camps contextualize the Anabaptist theology and values, which are at the heart of the Mennonite faith tradition and the denomination.

The participants in this study bring a voice to the love that is fostered in relationships modeled after the example of Jesus. The supportive relationships espoused Anabaptist values of reconciliation, service to others, and group discernment. The participants' approach to reconciliation in the camp experience gave value to each person in the situation. In following the example of Christ's service, they helped each other to

develop their potentialities. As with the Anabaptist practice of discerning the voice of God in Scripture, the participants processed their internal stirrings with external feedback from the group. The staff described the process of sharing their beliefs and how that process in turn triggered self-reflection and a deeper understanding of themselves and their faith. Sharing during the evening campfires, especially, was a powerful time of learning for the staff in terms of articulating what it was they truly believed.

Supportive relationships and the desire to serve others were indicated as a response to following the example of Jesus. The quality of interactions within a community shapes an individual's experience. For Anabaptists, the communal ethic is a defining characteristic as they strive to be servant leaders (Neufeldt, 2013). Servant leadership is essential to the altruistic approach of serving others to enable them to also develop as leaders (Bryman et al., 2011). The posture of serving others invokes a connection between people that is profoundly trustworthy and supportive.

According to Laub et al. (1999), servant leadership is inclusive and promotes community among teams that leads to stronger collaborative relationships. Participants indicated a strong focus on including others. Through an Anabaptist belief that Jesus preached peace, all people are to love their enemies, to seek not to harm them, and to care for those around them. This understanding of peace theology was emphasized in staff interactions. The participants agreed that the camp culture was strengthened by group discernment, serving others, and relationship building. Just as Jesus sought out those who were excluded or did not fit in with the majority of society, the same approach was applied to summer camp. In focusing on follower performance and growth, Northouse (2012) claims that servant leaders have an expected outcome of greater self-actualization

for their followers. As each person in the group gains greater self-actualization, there is an increase in team effectiveness (van Dierendonck, 2011). These claims were validated in this study and were highlighted by a quote from Kevin: “We would split up into groups and pray and have deeper reflection in support groups. This would be a time for a deeper understanding and self-actualization.” Self-actualization began with reflection within relationships that were safe, trustworthy, and respectful. The support felt through the small-group discussions and prayer allowed for deeper understanding and development of self-actualization. As a result, the staff began expressing their creativity, spiritual growth, and desire to serve the campers and fellow staff.

The way that the summer staff developed their understanding of leadership can be understood within Mezirow’s transformative learning theory. Although they had varying degrees of insight into how their experience affected them, all of the participants indicated that their experience had a positive impact on their leadership growth. Some articulated that their experience at camp involved learning on a deeper level. In categorizing these levels within transformative learning, Habermas (1984) identified instrumental learning and communicative learning. Learning on the instrumental level is a way to improve task-oriented problem solving or to improve performance. The communicative level is a process of reflecting with a group of people to gain a deeper understanding of perspectives.

Examples of instrumental learning included learning to create lesson plans, teach activities, and speak before a group. These examples were highlighted by the participants as being crucial to developing skills for their future careers such as going into ministry, serving as a missionary, becoming a teacher, or working in not-for-profit administration.



The practice of leading happened during direct supervision of different activities and groups of campers and through leading music each day. New staff members were often paired with experienced staff. This created a learning environment for the younger staff to follow an example that helped them to function at a higher level. The staff described developing to a greater potential because they were leading among supportive peers while being mentored. Regardless of where their internal journey of leadership started, the external support and discernment helped to validate the leadership qualities. The staff were able to bridge the gap between their perceived inability to lead an activity and the actual performance of such act because of collaboration with more capable peers (Vygotsky, 1978).

An essential part of the learning that led to leadership development occurred as the staff reflected on the ways they were practicing their leadership skills. Individuals learn differently when they are learning to perform tasks than when they are learning for the purpose of understanding beliefs (Mezirow, 1990). Freire's (1970) contribution to transformative learning theory is validated in this context in which the summer staff were exchanging ideas, discussing problems from various perspectives, and constructing new understandings together that were tested against the example of Jesus. This discernment process is similar to a hermeneutical circle of reflection and discernment (Bernstein, 1982). The staff meetings, prayer groups, and worship sessions intentionally created space for deeper reflection among the staff. The stories of the participants described their insight from discussing their personal and spiritual growth. Their account of these discussions matches Mezirow's (1990) description of critical reflection, as a collaborative process of transformative learning that may lead to a perspective transformation.

Communicative learning occurred as the staff critically reflected on their personal and spiritual growth. Through these intentional times of reflecting they were able to more accurately identify patterns and begin to construct new meaning of leadership through consensual validation (Mezirow, 1990). Furthermore, the increased level of self-awareness and depth of group reflection led to examining presuppositions about their role as leaders. The summer staff helped each other to explore alternative perspectives as they practiced leading in new ways.

The leadership development that took place in the context of this study was a result of a servant leadership style that fostered critical group reflection and led to self-actualization. The pursuit of self-actualization was a mutual effort. Self-actualization began with reflection within the safe context of deep friendships and respect. The support felt through the small-group discussions and prayer allowed for deeper understanding and development of self-actualization. As a result, the staff began expressing their creativity, spiritual growth, and desire to serve the campers and fellow staff. This contextualizes Burns's (2003) call for the transforming impact people can have on each other. It is also a setting to develop two crucial attributes of leadership: the ability to creatively adapt to change and the ability to improvise in the face of challenges with courage and confidence (Burns, 2003).

### **Recommendations From the Study**

This study provides several questions warranting more study. Thus, the following recommendations have emerged that:

1. Camp directors need to recognize the importance of developing group dynamics that build trust.

2. Camp directors need to schedule time for intentional group reflection.
3. Camp directors need to explain the theological foundations of their leadership style.
4. Camp directors need to invite their staff to continue to articulate their faith as it evolves and grows.
5. Camp directors need to find ways to build on the personal development that has occurred in their staff prior to beginning service at camp.
6. Camp directors need to enrich the leadership development of their staff by pairing them with mentors.
7. Camp directors need to be recognized as a young adult leadership development arm of the church.
8. Denominational church leaders need to become aware of the resources that summer camps provide for developing church leaders.
9. Denominational church leaders need to partner with camp directors to validate the theologically grounded leadership development occurring among camp staff by developing curriculum for the development of summer staff at all Mennonite camps.

### **Implications for Future Research**

Several themes emerged in this study with implications for future research on the leadership development of adults serving at Mennonite camps. It is recommended that further research be considered in the following areas:

1. Further research is needed to understand the transformation of perspectives before, during, and after services at Mennonite camps and to identify the catalysts for these changes.

2. More quantitative research is needed to identify a standardized set of indicators of leadership development to assist camps in assessing their results where leadership development is concerned.

3. Further research is needed to understand the demands of the current leadership roles of those who have served on camp staffs and how camps can be more intentional in providing opportunities for their staff to develop these competencies.

## APPENDIX A

### LETTER SENT TO THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF MENNO HAVEN CAMP AND RETREAT CENTER

# Andrews University

Seek Knowledge. Affirm Faith. Change the World.

January 8, 2013

Doc Johnson  
9301 1575 East Street  
Tiskilwa, IL 61368

Dear Doc,

I am currently pursuing a PhD in Leadership from Andrews University. My dissertation is on the leadership development of summer camp staff. I am requesting your approval in contacting some of the former summer staff members from the past 15 years. Their participation in this study is limited to a single one hour interview. You may not benefit personally from this study; however, your participation may provide a long-term benefit for future camp staff. There are no costs for participating in this study other than the time spent completing the interview. The central question that guides my study is “How do adults who served at camps as emerging adults describe their experiences that helped shape them as leaders?”

If you have any questions about the study, I encourage you to contact the chair of my committee Dr. Janet Ledesma, at Andrews University (269-471-6054).

Please find the attached interview questions that I will be using to conduct my study. If you grant permission, please copy the text from the other attachment onto Menno Haven letterhead and return it to me.

Blessings,  
Jason Harrison

## APPENDIX B

### APPROVAL LETTER FROM MENNO HAVEN CAMP AND RETREAT CENTER

# Menno Haven Camp and Retreat Center

Youth and Family Camps • Retreats and Conferences • Adventure Education

January 14, 2013

Dear Jason Harrison,

I have reviewed your proposed study involving former summer staff members from Menno Haven Camp and Retreat Center. I grant you permission to conduct interviews with them inviting them to reflect on their experiences of working at Menno Haven.

Permission granted by:



Doc Johnson  
Executive Director

[doc@mennohaven.com](mailto:doc@mennohaven.com)



9301 1575 East Street, Tiskilwa, Illinois 61368-9710 • Phone: 815-646-4344 • Fax: 815-646-4301  
E-Mail: [info@mennohaven.com](mailto:info@mennohaven.com) • Web Site: [www.mennohaven.com](http://www.mennohaven.com)



## APPENDIX C

### INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL LETTER

January 22, 2013

Jason Harrison  
Tel: (574) 903-4739  
Email: [jasoharrison@yahoo.com](mailto:jasoharrison@yahoo.com)

**RE: APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL OF RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS**  
**IRB Protocol #:** 12-182      **Application Type:** Original      **Dept.:** Leadership  
**Review Category:** Expedited      **Action Taken:** Approved      **Advisor:** Janet Ledesma  
**Title:** An Exploratory Study of the Experience of Emerging Adults Who Served as Summer Camp Staff in the Mennonite Setting.

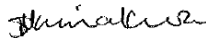
This letter is to advise you that the Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed and approved your IRB application of research involving human subjects entitled: "*An Exploratory Study of the Experience of Emerging Adults Who Served as Summer Camp Staff in the Mennonite Setting*" IRB protocol number 12-182 under Expedited category. This approval is valid until January 22, 2014. If your research is not completed by the end of this period you must apply for an extension at least four weeks prior to the expiration date. We ask that you inform IRB whenever you complete your research. Please reference the protocol number in future correspondence regarding this study.

Any future changes made to the study design and/or consent form require prior approval from the IRB before such changes can be implemented. Please use the attached report form to request for modifications, extension and completion of your study.

While there appears to be no more than minimum risk with your study, should an incidence occur that results in a research-related adverse reaction and/or physical injury, this must be reported immediately in writing to the IRB. Any project-related physical injury must also be reported immediately to the University physician, Dr. Hamel, by calling (269) 473-2222. Please feel free to contact our office if you have questions.

Best wishes in your research.

Sincerely



Sarah Kimakwa  
Research Integrity & Compliance Officer  
IRB Office

## REFERENCE LIST

## REFERENCE LIST

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